# JOURNAL OF
# MARIE LENÉRU

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# JOURNAL OF MARIE LENÉRU

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# JOURNAL OF
# MARIE LENÉRU

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# PREFACE

MARIE LENÉRU *was born at Brest, June 2, 1875. Her father, who had entered the navy at the age of sixteen and received the Légion d'honneur at twenty-five for heroism displayed during the siege of Paris, died in 1878, leaving a little girl of two.*

*Her maternal grandfather was Admiral Dauriac, who also died in 1878.*

*From the literary point of view, Marie inherited no particularly marked tendencies. She belonged to a family of sailors, and her radiant childhood was passed in intimate contact with the sea, in a house overlooking the port of Brest. From her window she could see, beyond the great naval port, the whole sweep of the harbour.*

*She was a light-hearted little girl, adored by her friends, and held her family under the spell of her lovable character. She learned to read in a few hours, but this brilliant beginning was slightly misleading; for, in spite of her quickness, she lacked application. We are, for the rest, going to get an excellent idea of her qualities and defects, by running through a diary which she began to keep at about the age of ten. Here is the first page, written at Montpellier, and dated November 30, 1886. I respect its errors of spelling*[1] *and its lack of punctuation:*

[1] Which disappear, unfortunately, in translation. Tr.

"It is mama who has made me begin my diary for I wouldn't think of doing it to please myself; it is mama who bought me my copy-book so now it is really fun. This morning when I got up I still had to prepare my exercises in grammar and go over my lessons. I had plenty of time a little while before breakfast I went downstairs to fix my hair or at least have mama do it for me, then when I went up again it was after a discussion begun yesterday about longitude and latitude we ended by seeing that we all agreed except Aunt Alice. I read in the Veillées du Château *Delphine ou l'Heureuse Guérison* but I haven't yet finished it then we went to luncheon, afterwards mama made me go out with Fernande to buy my copy-book and buy a lamp which is lighting us now, and which is playing us very naughty tricks . . . etc. . . ."

*This first day's entry ends with a decision written in big letters:*

"I shall keep up my diary all my life."

*Marie Lenéru kept her promise, though not without having to wrestle with herself at the beginning for, under date of December 13, 1886, I note this opening sentence:*

"How this diary bores me! It gets on my nerves, absolutely."

*It is a remarkable fact that the little girl was already preoccupied with the moral side of her conduct. I*

*say "already," for this preoccupation with her duty towards God, her neighbour, and herself will later provide the basis for all her works.*

*In her childhood diary we are constantly coming across sentences like the following:*

". . . I did not say my prayers well because I was too sleepy, I ought to say that this has happened to me for some days now.

"Today for a walk we went to the fair. I was a pig (I ate two waffles and a slice of cocoanut cake) moreover I lied to Fernande telling her I was hungry.

"This morning I was lazy, mama had told me to go over my lessons and I only went over my *grammar* lesson and what is still worse when I went down to have my hair fixed I said to mama that I knew *all my lessons* very well so there you see were both laziness and lies, though I wanted so very much to be perfect, I begin my day well, when you think it is not yet noon!

"This morning *I didn't say my prayers well at all,* besides I don't say them very well in the morning anyway, I believe it is because I am not so *afraid of dying* as in the evening."

*Under date of December 24, 1886:*

"How happy I am! *I am in a state of grace* since this morning, *for I will go to communion this evening at midnight mass;* it was coming back from Rendall's that we went to *confession*, mama, aunt Alice,

Fernande and I; at first I was terribly frightened to go there so early. It was eleven o'clock and it seems to me people have too much time left to commit other sins, but after all in spite of this time I think I have not *yet* been guilty of other faults.

"I believe I had perfect contrition, I shall be so happy!

"Tomorrow! how many things I shall have to say."

*Perhaps, but the diary shows no trace of them.*

*February 1, 1887:*

"I have only a little bit of time for we are going to dinner, so I will begin quickly. I am fairly satisfied with myself today I have not lost my time, only I believe I have told one or two little fibs which have spoiled my whole day for me.

"Yesterday I read in Victor Hugo *Zaharie* all told it is his own story; he was educated by a priest who taught him his *à peu près*[1] for as he says *all religions are des à peu près* and *people mar children's minds by teaching them such things but fortunately it doesn't always leave so much trace example Voltaire,* what is he thinking of? Is that the best thing Voltaire did? have we any right to think like that, in his poems he doesn't hesitate to call upon God! Why does he blame His worship, it is not the best thing Hugo does either, now he is dead he doesn't think like that any more, I'm sure!"

[1] Slipshod expressions or statements. Tr.

*Sunday, February 13, she takes a great resolution:*

"Still another new undertaking! I hope it is going to succeed! I have begun to draw up an ideal of the life I shall try to lead as far as possible but I promise nothing."

*And now, a touch of coquetry:*

"Oh! how happy I am! how happy I am! When I came home mama told me to go upstairs because she had some picking up to do, I went up without the least idea, then just as I was starting to write my diary I saw that mama had forgotten a box on the table I went, I looked, what did I see? a ravishing manicure-set, simply ravishing, ravishing! so in a minute I am going to try it and I shall try everything: the file, the scissors, the brush and the polisher, afterwards, when there is powder in the powder-box, I shan't fail to use some of it."

*She is still easily astonished:*

"Mme. L. G. left several days ago and has invited us to dine with her when we go to Paris, good for she is very nice but kind of funny, for example she calls her son-in-law *Monsieur* and he calls her *Madame*, then she simply detests kissing ah what a funny woman!"

*Now for a little drama:*

"I mean today to write a lot, we went to school as usual, Marie took us with Carl, we were ahead of time mademoiselle was not there yet, as Carl

had to take his walk, Marie said to Fernande: 'Mademoiselle we haven't time to wait, Madame gave me a letter for Mlle. C . . . will you hand it to her' certainly said Fernande, but as she took the letter she recognized Uncle's writing and she added quickly: but after all Marie since mama told you to deliver it yourself you had better do so. How did it happen that Fernande changed so quickly the moment she saw her father's writing, it is because Uncle Lionel has thought for a long time we had too much given us to do and he said he would write to Mlle. C . . . and say so, so that we were both very much frightened thinking how she was going to take this letter, surely she is going to make a face, luckily she read it during Monsieur Chab . . . 's lesson . . . and I didn't see her making it; but, what a change! how nice she has been ever since! a perfect shower of petting! something that doesn't happen every day and moreover I got 10 for my dates, but with Mlle. C . . . that could not go on like that, nervous as she is and mama saw it very clearly; when I went to say goodbye to her, she had such a palpitation that she trembled all over. She has sent an answer to Uncle Lionel, I'd like awfully to know what she said to him, poor Mlle. C . . . .

"M. Chab . . . 's lesson was very interesting: it was on Molière, but what seems to me very sad is that poor Molière ended his life like a joke, playing the *malade imaginaire;* just the same it is a

lucky thing he was French, for no country has anyone who can rival him; he is universal as an Englishman said (but that doesn't prevent his being absolutely French)."

*February 17, 1887, the idea of war appears for the first time in the work of the future author of "La Paix."*

"Only one word before dinner: WAR! it is the only thing people talk about, *mon Dieu!* let us be frank, at any rate if we are going to have war, let us know what we are saying (how badly I write, I am in such hurry too); but after all I don't believe we know anything about the future otherwise these prating papers would long ago have cried it on the housetops; but if there is war and if there is nothing else for me to do but to make lint that's something that wouldn't suit me at all, though if I could get into the hospitals; mama would have been there if it hadn't been for me, what a PATRIOTIC bore! what nuisances children are after all! But mama could easily arrange to get me in with her which would have all these advantages: 1° render a lot of services. 2° mama will be able to satisfy her own wish to go 3° and mine, which is to be able to be useful in some way 4° to get used to the sight of blood, to the sound of *firing* and not to be useless the disadvantages that it would be very sad, there aren't any others; it is to be hoped however that the war will not come to disturb us

for what a lot of people would die! why always want to have so much land what use is it anyway?"

*A new conscientious scruple, but with a tendency to compromise:*

". . . He questioned me on *l'Avare* what luck, I got 9; as for my history I took last place so as not to have to recite it for I didn't know it very well, I acted as if I were awfully sorry and to tell the truth I was enchanted.

"I believe that except for this sort of little fib today, I am sure of it even I have not lied since my confession ah yes I did though, the very same day I said I had written my composition as closely as a certain thing I had shown mama and not at all, I hadn't in the least written it like that, but why should I have lied, it's awful, what good did it do me? I must absolutely cure myself. Think of Fernande who believes I haven't even exaggerated since my last confession! speaking of confession reminds me I haven't yet done my penance, so I am going to do it at once."

*Monseigneur who was to have confirmed her became ill. The ceremony was postponed to Marie's great disappointment, and then the bishop died. She gives an account of his last moments:*

"M. le Curé has told about Monseigneur's death, he died like a saint he didn't miss saying mass a single time though he was sick and even said it the day of his death: as he felt he was going to die

he went to one of the reception rooms, all dressed up in his priest's robes they came in procession to bring him the viaticum, he was surrounded by a number of priests and persons after he had said goodbye to them he took his cross kissed it then several minutes later he died. He remained conscious up to the very end although from time to time he was delirious and he would talk of nothing but confirmation."

*Childish worry and maternal wisdom:*

"I was very much afraid on Wednesday that I did not have perfect contrition but mama said to me that since I wanted very much to have it and did everything I could to have it then I really had it that reassured me."

*Now we see a literary rival appearing on her horizon:*

"I am extremely lazy about writing my diary and today I do not disguise the fact that it bores me to extinction it is not like Mlle. Courb . . . who wrote 1500 pages in three months."

*June 27, 1887; Marie reveals to us the secret of her lying tendency, and it seems to me that she gives a reason for it so praiseworthy in a future dramatist, that it ceases to be in the slightest degree a defect:*

"The sins that I have to overcome in myself are: lying for although I find I lie a good deal less I often

disguise the truth for example to give more interest to a story I am telling; then I am not always nice to my friends and to Henriette, especially to Mathilde who irritates me, there are moments when I want to slap her, for instance day before yesterday we were jumping the rope I said to make it longer because of my hat and what did she do but amuse herself by hitting it with her fist; I don't pay enough attention to what mama says either and yet that is one of the things which ought to help me correct my faults; then I find I pay attention to the effect I want to produce and I think that this is perhaps my greatest sin for it may make us pose and there is nothing I have more horror of than that I ought rather to strive to please God; I have still another fault I don't pay enough attention when I am praying and when I am in church. What a lot of sins and yet I am still not very old (*She is twelve!*) I must absolutely cure myself of them for in a sermon during retreat we were told that the further we go in life the worse sins become. But what is much worse still is that when I go to confession I do not feel sorry enough for all these sins so in order to have perfect contrition at the confession before my Confirmation I shall say ten beads every day morning and evening.

"Now that I have seen all my faults I must see their corresponding virtues so that I can practice them, for as we were also told during retreat, there are not only sins of commission but there are sins

of omission as well: so from now on I shall practice all the virtues I can but particularly: frankness, charity, obedience, piety, and simplicity and every day I shall enter in my diary the result of my good resolutions."

*We should like to know the title of the work Marie speaks of in the following passage:*

"My literature is delicious today I have learned the introduction to it, the style is elegant, light, clear and poetic there is a description of Greece it is something ravishing."

*Further on she tells that she has been given the rôle of Grande Duchesse in a comedy whose title is: "La journée de la princesse." It is a step on the way to the theatre!*

*Amusement at the expense of her neighbour does not prevent her from having a kind heart. The following little anecdote proves it:*

"Yesterday I had a good laugh; I bought some candy from the old man, I asked him to give me pink ones, he gave me white, I told him again no pink, then he handed me violet, Henriette who was there whispered to me that he did not know one colour from another I burst out laughing the poor old man looked at me and so he wouldn't think I was laughing at him I said to Henriette: Will you please not make so many faces."

*Marie does not seem as yet to be very strong in arithmetic, for on July 2 we read this:*

"From now on I am going to give a lot of time to my flowers, yesterday I found my poor rose-bush infested with thousands of little lice I got rid of a good many but Mme. L . . . told me that a single rose-louse makes 8 little lice every day, so supposing I left 8 today there will be 56 of them consequently I must begin all over again so I am going to work at once."

*July 5 she resolves to write a work of imagination:*

"Yesterday I read in the Aneid and a passage of 'Pecheurs d'Islande' I found that very pretty, looking at the English *Illustration* just now I saw a picture showing some poor people driven from their cottage because they couldn't pay and I said to myself I must write a story about them (since I am crazy about writing stories) instead of always telling about battles and things; so when I have finished my diary I will make a outline of my story, I will do it as carefully as I can for it is a pretty subject and deserves to be well treated; before beginning it, I will say a little prayer to God to ask him to inspire me and not to let me write my book too badly."

*Next day she put her plan into execution:*

"At last! I have made a draft of my story I think it will be very pretty today I must begin it,

to my mind this is the hardest part of all; I will make a habit of correcting every Monday the work I have done during the week and I hope that in this way I shall manage to do something not too bad; I shall dedicate my story to Fernande."

*Literature does not distract her too completely from her music, for she tells us that she is studying on the piano the accompaniment to "Dites la jeune belle," and as music has a softening influence, she conceives a greater liking for the Mathilde whom she had formerly been templed to slap and lends her a story entitled "La petite Duchesse." How rapidly children's imagination developes in distinguished society!*

*On July 26 I come across a recipe for good behaviour:*

"I am in a good state of mind for I have made myself a ring and I have said to myself that to be worthy to wear this ring I must lead an absolutely perfect life yet there is nothing remarkable about it it is a simple pink and white ring but because of the importance I have attached to it I hope it will help me to be better.

"I am much upset for Fernande has typhoid fever for the third time and it seems that her nervous system is affected, but poor Fernande has at least one great pleasure she has two nuns as nurses and since I know her I am sure that that will perhaps make her less ill."

*This prevision proved well-founded, for several days later I read that Fernande is much better.*

*Saturday, August 21:*

"I must confess that if I have come to write my diary it is because mama had made me do so for I didn't in the least want to, I was playing crocket (*sic*), alone it is true, but I was having a good time and the idea of stopping hardly appealed to me; well since here I am now, the best thing I can do is not to make a botch of it.

"We left Tuesday morning at 10 o'clock. Alexandrine came to fetch us and uncle met us at the station. Mme. de P . . . and her daughter left also, I believe they must have been moving for they had six trunks and three or four packages, M. Périchon's voyage [1] all over again. We went as far as Kérhuon with Mme. and Mlle. F . . . ; then we changed cars at Landernau, we were in the same compartment with a gentleman and a lady who made me want to laugh over and over again; they were on a pleasure trip to visit the country, they made notes and as there was only one pencil between them they took turns in using it. The gentleman was fat and the lady was not to be pitied either, when she sat down she raised her skirt almost to her knees so that it wasn't hard for me to get a good idea of her figure; once I believed

[1] Le Voyage de M. Périchon by Eugène Labiche. Tr.

they were going to quarrel, unfortunately they stopped, it would have such fun to hear them! The lady's voice and way of holding her head reminded me a little of Mme. B . . . but worse still; then the gentleman ate bread and truffled galantine in little doll's plates and the lady a plum tart; we were better provided we had brought cakes, peaches, and grapes. At Quimper there got in a gentleman who smelt strongly of perfume and who combed his moustache with a comb which was also made for a doll he was accompanied by a soldier just as spick-and-span as he was they talked all the time about the army and politics; what made me like them was that at Rosporden they threw money to a bagpipe-player, they got off at Quimperlé. Now enough about our travelling companions, let us speak a little of ourselves and our impressions. I brought with me from Brest a game which I played but without success; I musn't forget either to say that I wore a veil and that I was very proud of it. The way was delicious, first the magnificent view across the harbour and then the landscape, the estates, etc., etc.; but what struck me most was the country about Châteaulin those little hills covered with green and that pretty valley where the river passes all bordered with poplars was something delicious the horizon was extremely clear, I pointed this out to mama who said that M. D . . . had told her that just outside some city near Nancy the horizon is so clear that

one side you see the sun playing on the windows of the cathedral of Metz fifteen leagues away. . . ."

*We find an entry dated September 25, which affords us a real revelation:*

"I do my diary so irregularly that I ought to be ashamed, yet I am not, I do not take my diary seriously enough, yet I put into it all I do and all I think, but my rôle in life is so secondary that I do nothing really important . . . it is wrong to say so, for it is complaining of the life I lead which is however one of the happiest I know and it is for me alone to make it more important, what I say here is not pride, for if I want to have a more important life it is not in order to be talked about, on the contrary, but so as not to be 'a useless burden upon the earth.'"

*She is continually besieged by conscientious scruples, but they are not inexorable:*

"I shall go to confession tomorrow with mama and Henriette, this worries me a little because yesterday we made some fun of little D . . . ; not precisely made fun of her for Louise G . . . says we did not commit a sin, but all the same I prefer to confess it. I have just examined my conscience and I am very sad when I see that I always fall back into the same faults, it is true I am not so bad as I used to be for example when I lie it is more exaggeration or dressing up a fact and

the same way for everything, but what I should do is to break myself of it completely. Well I don't despair; especially if I do a little religious reading every day; I should like very much to believe that what a holy priest said was true: 'I vouch for the salvation of a child who spent five minutes every day in meditation.'"

*A little further on, she remarks that it is particularly on the Promenade that she falls into sin.*

*Ought she avoid going there for that reason? A problem of conscience! Besides the devil is on the watch for us everywhere; for Marie shows little eagerness to put on a plush cloak, because plush makes one stout and she wishes to appear slender. Vanity!*

*September 27 the weather is not fine and this spares her the temptation to appear uncloaked upon the Promenade:*

"Just now, the rain is falling in torrents, such torrents that I have been obliged to leave the *plants* I was tending, to bring in my Begonia and my Pelargonium and to cover up my birds. I ought to thank God heartily for this good rain (good! I must go and look for some heavy cloths the rain is coming in through the windows in torrents) for otherwise I should have stayed on the balcony and I should not have done my diary.

"Fortunately, it was only a shower, the rain is over now, the clouds have gone, the sun is flooding us with light, and the sky with a deep indigo. From

the window where I am writing, not a single cloud is to be seen. Dear God, how beautiful your sky is! Now I am going to uncover my birds and take out my plants, for everything ought to enjoy the fine weather God sends us."

*October 3, Marie writes:*

"In the catechism class I am between Nanine and Louise. In front of us are Mlle. Lafaille and Mlle. Lemoine who lives across the way from us; I was very much upset to see her there because I used to stick my tongue out at her, but I hope she has forgotten it."

*Thursday, November 14, Marie announces a great resolution:*

"It is nearly a month now since I made a very serious decision: it is to enter the convent; Andrée and Henriette are my two confidents. I am in such a hurry for next summer to come so I can tell my secret to Fernande who will understand. But what I would like with all my heart is, after passing my youthful years in a missionary order, and having reached an age when I could no longer render so many services there, to enter a cloistered convent and prepare to die like a saint. If God found me worthy to receive the martyr's palm, my dearest wishes would be realized. . . ."

*However her mother's good sense plunges her into a deep perplexity, to judge from the following passage.*

"Mama read my diary for Thursday and I was very sorry because she made fun of me, however I haven't at all changed my mind concerning the question of the convent, but I have completely changed in my way of regarding religion, whereas trusting before to a little merit to go to Heaven, relying upon God's infinite mercy, it seemed to me absolutely impossible to go to hell, now I have come to understand that I must work, work and persevere that it is not enough to be satisfied with the good that it is better to seek the best. Mama told me the other day that married women were much more meritorious than nuns, I do not understand that! What, better than girls who leave their families, their friends, everything they have loved, who give up pleasures, who lead a life of work only, who make Christians in all countries,[1] who labor incessantly for the glory of God, even at the peril of their lives! I cannot understand how a woman who has her home, who stays in it, rests, if her children give her trouble to rear she enjoys them later! no I cannot understand that. Naturally, I am not speaking of cloistered nuns, they have every sort of happiness and it even seems to me that there is a certain shade of selfishness in some of those who enter these cloisters and a certain Carmelite whom Aunt told us about yesterday is in my opinion a coward, an ingrate and an egotist."

[1] Married women also. (F.C.)

*January 11, 1888, Marie is reduced to tears, for she has discovered in herself another defect which, according to her, might well become a horrible vice:*

"It seems to me that I am proud, I am not sure of it, but every time someone pokes a little fun at me, it hurts my feelings and I feel ready to cry."

*On reflection she perceives another black point:*

"Ah! *mon Dieu,* the more I examine myself, the more faults I find, I am afraid I am vain. Oh! how ugly that is!"

*Her admiration for the religious life does not preserve Marie from certain disillusions:*

"Yesterday I saw on the Cours a monk of the order of Saint Francis of Assisi, he was bare-footed and bare-headed; I did not like him at all oh! not at all and I hope all monks are not like him."

*Further on she remarks that it is a good thing to have influential friends:*

". . . I have found my book again; I am very glad, it is also because I prayed to Saint Anthony of Padua, I wonder what I could do to thank him he had already helped me to find: a gospel picture, a copy-book in which I had copied some verses, a copy-book which I made myself also with some verses, the ring that Gabrielle B . . . gave me, this book, and I don't know how many other things;

it is a sad confession to make, but I am so very disorderly that a day doesn't pass without my losing something, I wonder what I should do were it not for Saint Anthony of Padua.

"I feel that my diary does me a great deal of good, it helps me to know myself, which is a hard thing, then it is very pleasant, you seem to be talking with your soul, then what happiness it is to recall as long as you live your slightest feelings, yourself, in short, then I am about to enter upon the best years of my life, which are those of youth, after all, but of youth which can enjoy family gatherings, those happy moments which sweeten a whole lifetime (I do not believe it is posing to say that, since nobody will see it but mama)."

*Here is a passage which shows us what wicked tricks Marie's imagination played her:*

". . . I have spoiled my day by lying oh lying very badly indeed, (surely, Fernande, putting that in my diary knowing that you will read it, will be penance enough for me) well then, I said I had ridden horseback and that I had a riding-habit, then telling a lot of things about Pierre Loti [1] and about his dinner, I said that he had promised to dedicate a book to me, that his son was disguised as a minstrel, (I don't even know what that is) then I made believe I knew a certain lady of Gif whose name I had only seen in *L'Illustration* and a whole

[1] He was on friendly terms with the Lenéru family. (F.C.)

lot of other things. I have said only what was hardest for me to tell, but I told a lot of others. *Mon Dieu!* what an ugly thing it is to lie, but how hard it is to tell the truth, even in one's diary."

*She does not worry excessively however, as shown by this passage:*

". . . I am unfortunate enough to have a scrupulous conscience which sees sins where I am sure there aren't any but I prefer to tell them all the same."

*This ultra-scrupulous conscience reveals itself once more in the following lines and shows us at the same time how inevitably a soul, so elated at winning a game, will later aspire to glory:*

". . . we all four went to play ring-toss, and I won, but I was not very happy because I find it too hard to be charitable and humble when you achieve little successes like that. . . ."

*Saturday, October 14, 1888, she writes:*

"When I go over my memories and try to recall the times in my life, which I should love so much to live again, there is a delicious moment which I can't think of without my heart beating very hard, that moment, after my first Communion (ah! my poor first Communion, you are very far away in time, but very near in my heart!) was the sweetest of my life, by this moment I mean the 3 days of

my Confirmation retreat, Andrée said to me: Ah! that dear retreat, I can't think of it without wanting to cry! Well months have passed now and as I write these lines which bring it back to me, I almost have tears in my eyes. Never in my two retreats had I been so eager to attend these exercises, never have I felt so entirely at home in them; our preacher (extremely broadminded) had found the way to all our hearts, very simple, a country priest, he explained the Gospel to us so clearly, so firmly; humble in heart and mind. God had given him understanding of the Scriptures and never after a lesson did we feel tired. Then I was there between Andrée and Gabrielle, I had come to know several of the children in the catechism class and I felt brought so close to them that I loved them very much and took much more interest in them than before. . . ."

*After a long silence, she wrote, on April 14, 1889, these lines in which appears a first warning of the catastrophe:*

"Palm Sunday. I did not go to Mass today, moreover I have not gone for several Sundays now, because, what my diary does not yet know, the cold in my ears which I caught at Grande Rivière has got much worse and now I no longer hear anything at all, so I am going to return to Paris to consult M. Boucheron (that is the name of my ear-specialist) for the third time: besides I have recently

had a little trouble with the cornea, which is not yet entirely cured and which made my eye very sensitive and prevented me for some time from reading (I still read only very moderately) I still have a heavy cold, a little neuralgia (I am subject to it) Since a touch of rheumatism in my left knee, they are very stiff, and I do not walk straight, I cannot go out without the help of somebody's arm. I am still bothered with a loud singing in my ears. I have explained all this, although my diary is rather a soul-record, because I shall better understand my state of mind. Today I am in a rather bad humor (but I believe it is passing) I can hardly do my devotional reading, the type in the missals being too fine. As edifying reading I have the correspondance of Père Lacordaire and of Mme. Swetchine (I shall speak of it later)."

*The diary from now on proceeds by irregular leaps and bounds. We have reached June 19:*

"14 years old. Isn't it strange, I haven't once described my character, the account of what one does is not enough in itself to reveal it, it is also essential to know what state of mind impelled you to do it; here then is how I appear to myself, quite frankly: not precisely proud, I mean to say I do not like myself better than others, and yet I have a tendency to place myself above them, above those whom I don't love and whom I believe inferior to myself, in general above all those whom I don't

know; it seems to me that it is rather excessive dignity, consequently coming much nearer to vanity than to pride because I would rather be the last in a picked company than the first in an ordinary one: with me it is rather intellectual pride, when I compare myself of course, for when I examine myself I say to myself that this pride comes from a commonplace mind the fragility of which I quite recognize; when I think that if such were God's will I should become as stupid as a goose and precisely because I was stupid I should not perceive that I had sunk. As for wit, I believe that I love it too much and that sometimes I confuse it with mockery; yet there is nothing I detest more than to be made fun of myself, not because of the particular opinion of the person who makes fun of me, particular opinions being more or less indifferent to me (unless they are those of people I love and esteem) but it is these private opinions which constitute general opinion! And I must confess that general opinion is fairly important for me, I have a terrible fear of ridicule.

"As for judgment I believe I have some, seeing a person for the 1st time I know his character at once; but I know that judgment is so easily affected and I am subject to so many influences! It is not that I am weak and give up my opinions, but that I have none as yet and as once one has some I hold they should be adhered to, I wait before forming any till I have more judgment and experience. It

is fidelity to one's feelings and one's convictions which in its farthest extension makes martyrs!

"I am very far from being gentle and yet my nature is rather gentle than the reverse, but for some time now I have formed deplorable ideas on the subject of resistance. Thus of late, I oppose mama a good deal about my clothes, not that I attach an enormous importance to being well-dressed (although I pay a little too much attention to it in my opinion) but it seems to me that at my age one has a right to more liberty in that which concerns one.

"Sincerity and charity are less difficult; it is not that I am charitable and very very frank, just now I am enumerating not my merits but the traits of my character; thus I occasionally tell lies not very bad ones it is true but frequent. As for charity, I lack it terribly outwardly for inwardly I bear nobody ill-will and I love my neighbour, but what strikes me as ridiculous in them does not escape me and I have all sorts of trouble not to let it show: that is a ridiculous trait in me.

"Laziness, the fault which I despise most and which I did not have naturally, is however the one I have to fight the most, perhaps because of my deafness which deadens you a good deal and yet my ears are far from being wholly to blame, for I have my good days. It is shameful! especially the time I take to dress, I wander about constantly.

"I cannot say that I am really greedy, for it is

not hard for me to do without dessert as a mortification; that is to say once I have resolved not to take any, I haven't the least desire for it, but it takes me a certain time to decide and it musn't be believed that I mortify myself often! Very rarely on the contrary!"

*The lines we have just read display an attempt at psychological analysis rare in so young a being. Do they not evoke the image of a little bird trying its still clumsy wings on the edge of its nest?*

*Here, dated June 20, 1889, is the exposition of an indifference in which we shall not see her persevere:*

". . . However, we shall dwell forever in the hearts of those who have loved us. It is true that they, in their turn will pass away; but then, what difference will it make to us whether we are remembered or not, here below, by those who are indifferent to us? We shall pass from the heart into the memory, from the memory into forgetfulness, and the circles which form above the gulf which will have swallowed us will be replaced by an even calm."

*Little by little the child's diary leads us to the young woman's journal. Here is what she writes June 24, 1889:*

"I am reading with enormous interest the story of a nun: Oh, family life, with its joys even with its sorrows, how I love it!

"This book is very sad, that is why I love it so much, but I love what is sad because it is what is true, and then I must try to describe one of my sentiments which it has still further stimulated that is to say I love sorrow; it makes me suffer and it is for that very reason that I love it for one suffers only when one loves, and it is only when one loves that one is something, and sad memories are as dear to me as happy memories, dearer even.

. . . .

"O Fernande, O Mama, if you read me to find me a friend and a guide like Albert de la Ferronays.[1] It is funny, but I die of fear at the idea of loving my husband blindly!

. . . .

"I prefer not to dwell upon the swift flight of time, that leads to melancholy; I love this well enough in others, but not in myself.

"I am eager to receive my study books; my mind is somewhat asleep. It worked so well the month I spent at Montpellier! I have no right to let my intelligence decline.

. . . .

"Yesterday I went to sleep late, but it was because I was thinking of music and that exalts me

[1] Son of Comte de la Ferronays, diplomat and friend of Montalembert, but known to Marie Lenéru chiefly through the book of his sister Pauline (Mme. Ang. Craven) *Le Récit d'une Soeur*, Paris, 1882. Tr.

and keeps me from sleeping. Formerly I used to make up stories in bed, now, I sing to myself my favorite songs and I believe that gives me a little fever, but I don't care, it is so agreeable! Here are the songs I recall especially: *L'Adieu, Le Lac,* old songs of the time of Louis XIV, Châteaubriand's *Romance,* and a tune that I may have made up myself. . . . Then *'Guide au bord la nacelle,'* first because I like it very much, and then secondly because the first time I heard it, mama and aunt and I hummed it one evening while we were playing. . . ."

*Some days later she added:*

"I have just finished a book entitled *Nouveaux anneaux de la Chaine de Marguerite.* It is not quite so pretty as the beginning but that did not prevent me from devouring the two volumes in two days. Unfortunately . . . there is a flurry of war between French and English. It was no use for me to try to change the nationalities, that is to say to imagine that the Mays were French. I came very near dropping my book. I am certainly much more tolerant for the reality, but not at all for books and when I read an English novel, for me, all the Anglicans become Catholics. Provided you don't look too closely, that works well enough.

"It is raining, I am happy. I love rain and wind so much. It seems to me that one feels oneself alive when it rains or when the wind blows."

*At the dinner table, in the convent of the Augustins, in the Rue de la Santé, where she was staying for treatment, Marie had a little adventure:*

"I must tell one of the little stories I keep for myself, listen: there is at table a very old unmarried lady (Mlle. X . . .) who has a companion (Mlle. P . . .) very plain full-face, rather pretty in profile and very coquettish from every angle, who does not let her say a word, she always answers for her, smiles at her mistress' friends with a protective air, etc., etc. It is not strange I do not feel any affection for her, so I reflected that I answered her smile as if I loved her, that seemed to me hypocritical and I didn't look at her any more, she noticed it and mama told me to begin to say *'bonjour'* to her again, it was at luncheon that I was to perform this act of heroism, as she did not smile at me any more and I did not want to make the first advances, I waited, promising myself that after luncheon I would go to her and say to her with a peculiar expression: *'Bonjour, Mademoiselle!'* luckily the postulant served as a medium to make our glances meet, we looked at the same time to see what dish she was bringing and the two clouds charged with electricity released the lightning!"

*Beginning with December 11 the writing in the diary changes completely. The letters are a centimeter high, there are three or four words to the line. Marie has passed five months without being able to*

*write, and this operation remains terribly difficult for her. It is evident, however, that neither she nor her mother takes the painful experience tragically. The year 1890 arrives and with it the end of the sheaf of childhood memories.*

*Marie Lenéru's child diary stops in January 1908 and her woman's journal, which we are about to read, begins in September 1893. Three years and a half separate the child of fourteen from the girl of 17 and what an abyss between these two persons!*

*It is not easy to follow the stages of this evolution. Marie yielded only as much of herself as it pleased her to show, a good deal on the surface and very little in depth. I have had the privilege of reading numerous letters written to her intimates during this period of transformation, letters filled with expressions of limpid tenderness, with literary impressions, with details concerning her studies, which it is easy to divine were carried on with resolute energy. All this gives no idea of what she wrote for herself. "You will readily understand," her mother said to me, "what the reading of these records meant for me! To be sure, I knew that my daughter must suffer more than another in her place. But to such an extent! How could I guess it, when her whole life was but one sweet and constant smile of valiant gaiety meant to help me bear our double ordeal and render my life possible, almost happy." The principal event of this epoch seems to have been a stay at Lourdes in the hope of*

*a cure. Here is how she expresses herself with regard to this experiment, before leaving:*

"You know my ideas: If I should go to Lourdes all my life without being cured, that would not make me lose a particle of my faith in Providence. I am not even going there to put it to the test. I regard these miracles (since they are historically established) as an homage rendered to the faith of the humble, to which I have no right. You see, then, that I can go without my reason having to reproach me with being out of harmony with myself. I have been told that the site is really beautiful, and that we should go to the Cirque de Gavarnie. Is not that enough to console you for the fact that Heaven performs no miracle in your favor?"

*Ah! be not deceived by this impassibility! I am sure that, on her knees, among the poor beings who crawl to the sill of the sacred grotto, their feverish eyes imploring the Virgin in her blue mantle, Marie pronounced the most desperate, the most agonized of all the supplications heard there. But she did not deceive herself when she said that, for her prayer to be answered, she needed a humility which was not hers. A woman who, throwing herself at the knees of the Saviour's Mother, is occupied with the idea of being in harmony with her reason, has not the slightest chance of obtaining anything. If Marie brought back from the voyage the recollection of the sublime site of Gavarnie, it was at the expense of the angelic vision offered her springtime faith.*

*And now, leaving the childish pages, if we enter upon the journal of the grown woman, we experience the horrible sensation which haunts Marie every morning as she awakes, when, her head buried in her pillow, she thinks she hears the noises of the house at Brest; disturbances in the Rue de Siam, gunboat whistles, guns firing salutes, and finally the chambermaid's "bonjour"; then her lids lift on her poor eyes, nearly blind, and the daily desolation begins again for this brain boiling inside a marble statue. Let us contemplate Marie, prisoner of her infirmity, beating her head against the bars of her cage. Her religion, during the first years, accompanies her and still sustains her a little, but so very little! . . .*

"No matter how hard I try, I can never again be as happy as another. . . . Isolation has led me to reflection, reflection to doubt, doubt to a more sincere and more intelligent need of God. . . . I have a religious soul, I feel a disgust for those who do not live their life as for eternity. . . . Said thirty beads of my rosary while walking in the fields. I do not believe that a prayer is ever hackneyed, even when it is oral. It is always worthy of the intention which prompts it. . . . Though you say it (*the rosary*) over eternally, you never repeat it. . . ."

*Later the religious spirit alone seems to persist:*

"I do not know just how far I am a Christian. I pray and do not hope. I await in vain and am not

disappointed. Mixture of scepticism and deliberate religion. Is it, perhaps, indifference?"

*No longer having her appointed place among believing souls, towards whom will Marie turn? Alas! Let us recall Faust's melancholy as he wandered along the countryside and the tears he shed when the joyous songs, floating above the ramparts of the town, reminded him that his intelligence forbade him to be happy with the humble. Faust's tears are, doubt it not, those which wet Goethe's eyes; and if that man so handsome, so strong, adored by so many women, felt profoundly the isolation to which the unaccustomed development of his thought condemned him, what will not be the desolation of Marie Lenéru behind the double barrier of her infirmities and of her unfettered talent? She repeats it to us from the depths of her solitude, every time she cries: "Men are all we enjoy, the rest is nothing! . . ." She refuses to let her apparent serenity deceive us and we know, from the first pages, that resignation, for her, is but accepted despair. She is resigned because, for an intelligence like hers, the postures of rebellious women, with which Romanticism swarms, are inelegant and commonplace. But how far she is from becoming fixed in such an attitude! Each instant the interior agony betrays itself; and if, sometimes, her sob dies out in a smile, her smile forever ends in a sob. Instinct, which never abdicates before intelligence and shows itself the more imperious the more the soul boasts of its freedom,*

*showers her with disturbing images, among which the only one the contemplation of which she invites us to share, is noble:*

"I should be walking beside a man elegant and witty like me. . . . Double laughter, our tall figures swing along the road, like a figure in a quadrille. . . ." *In another place:* "It is delicious to be seen in public with a being—man or woman—of your own style and race. It is above all in walking that these affinities are enjoyed. . . . Quite aside from love, the sensual system of physical sympathies enmeshes us, isolates or binds us together. . . ." *And finally:* "I imagine love as an exceptional concordance of movement, the miracle of the double star."

*But such visions could scarcely satisfy the exigencies of her imagination. She would like to have so many things which money alone could procure for her: wealth, half of happiness. It does so much to embellish it! Marriage for money involves a higher aesthetic than marriage for love. It makes possible Italy, music, horses—and love, into the bargain. Everything needful for happiness. And again, is love really necessary? In the last analysis she speaks of it through a certain scrupulousness, and how this light tone rings false after the dance of the two stars! Farther on Marie desires money above everything, yes, even health. It is true that she confesses, on the other hand:*

"Ah! at present I no longer have . . . anything of my Jansenist acceptance, I want passionately to be cured. . . ." *She tells us the reason:* "I love life, I love life prodigiously . . . Everything in it intoxicates me. . . . If I see myself in a mirror, I seem to be bringing myself some mysterious and intoxicating news. Henceforth, I feel, my life will hold for me, to the very end, the enchantments and surprises of a convalescence. . . ."

*Evidently the day she wrote the foregoing lines she became definitely aware of her talent, of which, as a matter of fact, she had so long foreseen the consoling virtue when she wrote:*

"I do not want to be appeased by anything but success. . . ."

*She goes so far as to pretend that the most overwhelming punishment God could inflict upon her would be to cure her, because, after having opened wide for her the gates of a higher world, he would compel her to retreat towards the exit. For this reason that, if suffering does not make us better, it makes us deeper. Marie declares that she is attached to her ordeal, regrets nothing, loves the mould into which she has been run. Nevertheless she disclaims obedience to a vulgar vanity, she desires glory rather as a means of winning illustrious sympathies, than for the sake of fame.*

"I want," *she says,* "a talent which shall be me, shall distinguish me, reveal me to a few—to those

alone who count for me. A talent which shall complete me, receive my intimate life and amplify it, and through which I can expend all my contemplative ardour, my will for hard work, a talent which shall absorb my time and my effort, my courage and my spleen."

*She condenses this state of mind admirably in a brief sentence:*

"In the long run it renders us terribly proud always to do without our fellows! . . . "

*Talent and genius are marvellous gifts, sublime enjoyment may be derived from them. Unfortunately thought traces deep wrinkles on the features; the body, too long bent over the writing-table, does not again become erect, and beauty protests.*

"Glory," *writes Marie,* "does not embellish woman and I do not wish to sacrifice the woman in me. . . . I shall always rather render myself inimitable by my way of wearing a dress by Chevert, than by all the talent and all the ugliness of the Eliots and of the Staëls."

*When you come across such opinions in her pages, beware of taking them as definitive, and here is the reason why:*

"There are days," *she writes,* "when I never want to laugh again, when I want to lose my pretty easy air and assume a lamentable one; when I

should like to inspire fear. It must be a consolation to be able to wear mourning for one's self."

*And, one is tempted to add, to make others wear it too. This is perhaps the one time in her journal when Marie expresses the desire to be pitied. Her pride preserved her from what she regarded as a weakness. Yet she hoped that her journal might one day be known, since she declares:*

"I shall do nothing to have it published, but I want it to be publishable."

*She even attaches much more importance to this than she wants to show; for, returning from a voyage, she writes the following note:*

"The box containing my copy-books, my whole journal for ten years was thought to be lost . . . in short, ten years of existence, drop by drop, my ten terrible years which Providence has striven so hard to render original—drop by drop preserved in such a way that I counted upon it—upon this makeshift of a will—to die with a little less anger in my heart."

*Translate: After I am gone, the journal will remain to say to those who admire me:*

"You have always seen me smiling, you have never surprised in me the slightest evidence of weakness, and learn now what energy I have needed not to cry aloud to you my distress."

*It was in obedience to this supreme desire that Marie's mother decided to publish these pages, though not without having confessed to me that she had already hesitated a long time before undertaking to read these mysterious lines of the tenor of which she had no suspicion. As the reader will see, the journal is not a journal at all, properly speaking, that is to say the notation, day by day, of the vicissitudes of an existence; there are far too many gaps in it for that, too many months of interval on a single page—years, even, which fill scarcely three or four. Marie said that she had recourse to her copy-books only in her moments of "mental headache." These meditations during the black hours, are touching invitations to those men outside of whom nothing else counts. But even though we do not spare her our pity, what we lavish upon her most of all is our admiration. I do not hesitate to predict that Marie's journal will take one of the first places among celebrated autobiographies. The names of Marie Bashkirtseff and of Amiel recur too often in her pages for us not to have the right to believe that she considered herself a rival who would not be offended by comparison with them. As for myself, when I see Marie Lenéru sighing after the God of her childhood, and, at the same time, a slave to the demon of pride, haunted by visions of amorous harmony and succumbing to vulgar longings for money and dress, too proud to permit herself to be pitied, too unhappy not to be thirsty for consolation, one day vain, the next eager to be ugly, deaf to human*

*voices but her ear pricked to the appeals of the most opposite instincts—when I see all this, I think of Flaubert and the immense Tentation de Saint-Antoine.*

*While the temptations pass and repass in infinite variety, there is one that clings to Marie and will accompany her to the day of her death: that of literary fame; and, as a permanent temptation is quickly transformed into a passion, Marie abandons herself entirely to the writing rage; and, without going so far as to say that she will ever forget from time to time her dreams of glory, I am convinced that even the certitude of never becoming famous would not have prevented her from working with all her heart and soul. Yet there is one point regarding which the Journal gives us no information. Did she ever, in the course of her literary existence, know those months of forgetfulness which the joy of creation procures to sincere artists? For them, there is no success which does not appear pale indeed compared with the joyous anxiety with which they see the children of their brain acquire a vitality more ardent than that of ordinary human beings. The unrecognized genius is not always to be pitied, for the creative intoxication has marked for him the hour of his triumph. If we are to judge only by appearances Marie did not know this consolation; but what do appearances signify when we are dealing with souls as complicated as hers!*

Les Affranchis *is Marie Lenéru's masterpiece, as well as her first dramatic composition. She put into*

*it so much of herself that it may be considered a splendid flowering of the Journal. The conscientious scruples which tormented the little girl on the threshold of the confessional, live again in the character of Hélène Schlumberger. As is natural, these moral preoccupations grow less and less in the plays which she will write later on.*

Les Affranchis *was sent by mail to Catulle Mendès, without any preliminary formalities, in 1908. He read it very rapidly and dispatched an enthusiastic telegram which brought Marie at once. Madame Mendès, who shared her husband's admiration, entered the manuscript for the prize offered by* La Vie Heureuse. *This was accorded unanimously and carried with it publication by Hachette.*

*Madame Rachilde presented the play to Antoine; but it was not until 1911 that, at the instance of Gabriel Trarieux, Antoine read it and produced it immediately at the Odéon, of which he was then manager. Its success was very pronounced. The beginner succeeded, at her very first attempt, in winning applause, during a number of performances, for a so-called drama of ideas, because, to employ her own expression, "she had put something into it."*

*About this time I knew Marie Lenéru. She had a gruff, hearty way of entering into the conversation, without preamble, like a person for whom communication was not easy, and who avoided expending herself in useless words. She spread over her knees the big sheet of paper on which I wrote my replies. Terrible*

*test, thus to consign to writing the feeble improvisations of a social dialogue! She responded in a colorless voice, because she did not hear herself speak. At the same time she was gay and smiling, but I was not unaware that the frankest gaiety is far from being an infallible sign of happiness, just as a charming face is not the sure index of a beautiful soul.*

*The war was a personal catastrophe for Marie and the signal for a total transformation. Seized with an unspeakable horror, her one thought thereafter was to manifest it in forgetfulness of her own misfortune. The Journal then lost much of its interest, for it is not general reflections upon the atrocities of war which, moreover, no one dreams of denying, that we seek in its pages.*

*During the bombardment of Paris, personal reasons obliged Marie and her family to take up their residence at Lorient. It was with real despair that she accepted the obligation to leave. She went, as a matter of fact, to her death. She soon fell ill with an infectious grippe and was, from the first, regarded as lost; but her youth and her love of life permitted her to make a protracted struggle. In the course of her long agony, the pious visions of her childhood hovered above her bed of suffering. Her journal has shown us that, little by little, her faith had become extinct; but she had nevertheless kept a great respect for a religious upbringing from which she had received so much moral beauty. She often said to her mother that, if she had sons or daughters, she would have them brought up in religious*

*institutions. In spite of her apparent indifference, the last tie between her soul and her cherished beliefs of the past was, then, not broken. Thus she received as a benefactor the priest who brought her the supreme consolations. She replied bravely to the prayers of extreme unction and reassured her mother who feared for her the emotion of such a moment. During the days which followed, a marked improvement manifested itself and gave a little hope to those who cared for her. She still found strength to joke with Dr. Albert Michaud, a childhood friend, who tended her with admirable devotion. Afterwards she became weaker and weaker, always smiling, without a regret. She died September 23, 1918.*

*Paris, March 19, 1921.*

François de Curel.

JOURNAL OF MARIE LENÉRU

# JOURNAL OF MARIE LENÉRU

*Accustom yourself, even to the things you despair of accomplishing.*

*Marcus Aurelius*

You stop short of what is possible. It is because you do not love yourself enough. Let those who love what they do, dry up over their work, forget bread and nourishment; but you attach less importance to your own nature than the engraver to his art, the dancer to his dance, the miser to his money, the ambitious man to his mad glory.

## 1893

I HAVE been vague and confused too long now, in my inner consciousness. I should study myself seriously to see which way to turn the helm.

Five years of intellectual life gone. My imagination has been playing with things, but I have let all my ideas lag to such an extent that I no longer know just where I am.

I suffer from this because I lead a life which is unworthy of me. Despite my horror of intimate journals, I shall from time to time permit myself these protests against myself, because it is a stimulant.

And then, since I no longer speak, I need to be mistress of my style. I feel it is too poor, and it is too inadequate for me.

*Tuesday, September 5, 93*

Nothing great has been done in this world with

weak convictions and God seems to have condemned all our failures with the words: "Man of little faith!"

It is evident that we must know what we do before staking our lives. I have faith enough to live like everybody else; but to do what I want to do, no.

I am eighteen years old, I have wished for everything, imagined everything, expected everything, the divine as well as the human, the supreme moral beauty in the sum total of all the vanities. My programme as a child was the high sanctity of the cloister, but *after the abandonment* of a royal luxury. No one will have turned his fantastic ambitions into a machine which functions so regularly, so calmly, so diurnally, so obstinately.

The highest pitch of all the prosperities seemed to me so indispensable to existence, that I could not get over the ease with which men did without it.

*Brest, December 8, 93*

I must react, give myself proofs of my existence. I am falling asleep *in a life which is not my own.*

No matter how hard I try, I can never again be as happy as another. Material objects continue to charm me, (I am speaking of the refinements of my toilette), but they disgust me when they have filched from me one hour of my intellectual and moral life.

It is not enough for me to be tired of a useless

trial, of a task without progress, of a purpose without strength and without duration: *I must will.* Whatever was or shall be willed on earth, will be accomplished. Now, what is this power which, depending upon itself alone, dispenses with every other?

We need to will that only which we do not desire enough, and we can will that only which depends upon ourselves.

To will is to want something which supposes an effort; but it is not willing to will for a time only, and not to will with all one's heart.

## 1894

*Brest, January*

There is but one scourge: discouragement. I am thinking not only of the despair which embraces a whole life, but of those everyday lassitudes which endure a period, an hour. The ensemble is not despaired of; and yet, in the detail, if the moments sacrificed were added together, the total would come very close to the whole.

Has he who, in God's sight, can sacrifice a second, the right to complain of the shortness of time? Come, it is still too long for you!

Some years ago I was full of courage; but, in reality, was that any test? I did not believe in duration, in time, that master of all energies. There was a period when I was astonished to feel

so little the weight of the ordeal, even finding in it a sort of excitement, which came near being contentment. But today I exaggerate. No one in my place would experience the distress and the boredom which are mine—especially the boredom, which is incessant.

And this at the only age when living is worth while! At the age whose memory ought to bring consolation for the rest. I shall never have any other youth than this. This is what my childhood so eagerly awaited: "When I am grown up!"

I work too much and I am bored. I am disheartened through my refusal to give myself time to read. I should take an hour a day to write and to reflect. I have wanted to rule my time too monastically. I have got my mind out of the habit of taking a single step freely. I felt myself much more alive three or four years ago, when I neither worked nor read.

As a result, I no longer know what I wish and I take less interest in what I do.

*Fouras, October, 1894*

I need to regard tranquilly, not only the present ordeal, but the ordeal through which I have passed—that phantom which I have behind me. I possess but one means: "to avenge myself by meriting happiness of the fate which does not give it to me."

What shall I do for this? Thank God, I have

faith enough to hope to have more. Today I have a "reserve faith" and my unforgettable childhood impressions; but I need a conviction permitting me to live like Saint Theresa. There are revenges which the cloister alone can give. "I despise all the rest, all that men hold to be blessings, and I consecrate my life to its discovery. . . . I am resolved to achieve that which is within reach of my reason, and desire with the utmost ardour to possess the truth, *not through faith alone,* but also through the intelligence." (St. Augustine)

*Brest, November 29*

I do not believe I was especially organized for work. All my tastes were against it. Study, however, will never be a makeshift for me. Without it I shall be merely second-rate, and to this I shall not be resigned. For it is not at the price of a vain erudition that I barter away my youth. Oh! all or nothing: happiness to the brim; or, if I must be hampered by ordeals, do like Saint Theresa, meet them boldly, have no fear, fix them, meditate them, understand them, prefer them, be unable henceforth to do without them.

## 1895

*March 15, 1895*

The farther I go, the deeper I sink. No projects, no future, and to feel my life slipping away like this! . . .

I should not want not to suffer any more. I should want never to have suffered.

In all things, I like only the transcendent, the superior, and everything escapes me.

*Brutul,*[1] *June 2, 1895*

Twenty years old today. God . . . I could say so many things, but I want to ask for nothing. I see you alone, my God, at the end of the long road I have to follow.

*Brutul, July 18*

If it were question of a moral suffering, the melancholy might be distracted "by those light pleasures which make us love life." I am not distractable.

What is resignation?

Accepted despair.

*Brutul*

I believe it is wrong to complain of finding life long. It is a melancholy thing, but it is not the worst. For time to seem long, it must have been felt, it must have left an impression; but when one is, as it were, immobilized in time, all moments coalesce and are confounded. We need to learn our calendar by heart to make sure that we live 24 hours a day and eight days a week.

This depreciation of time leads far! Fernande said she felt old. I too, but not like her. I feel old

[1] Near Brest.

because I see so few things between old age and me. . . .

Aunt H . . . accepts the idea of annihilation. Is it a strength or a weakness? "It is the end of suffering." In the first place, I declare that we delude ourselves with regard to what we suffer. And then we do not live in order not to suffer, but in order to be happy—happy with superiority, with excess.

## 1896

*Brest, February 25, 1896*

I do not want to suffer less, I have no reason to be less unhappy. I do not want to be appeased by anything but success, I do not wish to accustom myself to sadness as if I were born for that.

I shall be resigned the day I have understood. I shall resign myself without recrimination, without regrets, without melancholy. Before then, no rest. I shall never accept an evil on the pretext that I cannot prevent it. I prefer to continue purposely stirring up all the black thoughts on earth.

It is not to unhappiness that we should be resigned in order to end our suffering. We should not take an anesthetic, not suffer as we sleep, but as we walk and as we eat.

*Thursday, June 4*

I was twenty-one day before yesterday; and, although I haven't much enthusiasm, I want to

enter this date in my copy-book and to draw up a little the account of my present situation.

Comte de Maistre claims that no one has the right to protest when, on examining what is left, he can answer: "Myself."

My age always amazes me; and when I really convince myself that I am twenty-one, the impression is: Thank God, I am only so far!

It is because I have passed through such vortices that I no longer know just what there is behind. Yes, I have passed through a *blanck*.[1] I despair of ever being able to define this withdrawal from life. Physically, I certainly exist more for the others than for myself. They see me and hear me. That is the most terrible part of it, and that is what has happened to me, the little girl so unspoiled, so curious and so secure when people talked of those strange beings: the blind, the deaf, the dumb. It is the way of death: separation.

Isolation has led me to reflection, reflection to doubt, doubt to a more sincere and more intelligent need of God.

I have a religious soul. I lose all concern with what is mortal in me, without the slightest effort. I feel a disguest for those who do not live their life as for eternity. Religion is the strongest thing there is. It makes immortals of us, right here and now. Death, which does not kill, becomes but a bridge in space, a life-movement interrupted by nothing.

[1] English (misspelling) in the original. Tr.

I have reflected too soon on normal life. It would be impossible for me, and I have not a regret for the predestination which has *caught* me, has not let me enter upon the common way.

If God grants me what I ask of Him, I shall not have a regret for what has happened.

*Brutul, June 17*

Spare me, my God, when I appear before You and understand You at last, the feeling that I have not done all in my power to serve You.

I have ordered the use of my time as well as I could, for I need subterfuges to render my days possible. Every morning I awake more discouraged. I don't pay too much attention to it; but, as I look back, I see clearly that I have made headway. Each day brings its modicum of hope, and this is as it should be. Nothing imaginary in my case.

I may be sad to the day of my death, but I shall never be pessimistic. Misfortunes would not be so painful if what they suppressed were of no worth.

The miseries of this world reveal God more than they deny His existence. Can it be that nature has this justness of design, this will to a definite end, this ideal sequence? Yes, all this may be said . . . oratorically.

*August 15*

Oh! my moral ideas are also independent. It is not charity which takes it upon itself to develop the critical sense in us. . . .

Independent? It needs courage on our part, since we are expected to be sincere.

To want all we do, to know all we want. But the independent disgust us with independence. I am too intelligent ever to be "a rebel." Ah! those romantic souls, seduced by catchwords, and proud of their "rebellion," with a heartbreaking commonplaceness.

*Brest, November 4, 1896*

"Desire naught for thyself, seek naught, worry not, and envy naught of anyone. The future must remain unknown to thee, but this future should find thee ready for all."

"We nearly always imagine that everything is lost when we are thrown out of the beaten track: it is only then that the true and the good appear. So long as life lasts, happiness exists." (War and Peace.)

What point have I reached? Two roads: absolute scepticism and discouragement—faith and a passionate vocation for whatever happens. "No one takes my life from me; I give it freely." Advanced fairly far on the first way, it has cost me dearly enough and has, I believe, nothing further to teach me. After all, I want to live, to find at least a specious pretext for a necessary activity.

Here are my intentions:

To be able to render myself this justice that I have not neglected the least candle-end in my shades.

"To put sincerity into my soul," something so necessary and so difficult that, in order to attain this great calm, I should leave life aside."

To decide that existence has not begun for me—liberal concession. I am in an indeterminate tract of space where time is measured only by the movement of thought, of that inward life which grows precisely by what it expends. This situation will last as long as I need it in order to reach a moral decision. Then *facta erit lux*, and the world will begin.

Therefore, a provisional resignation.

Far, moreover, from being a vain word; for, if the mental road I am to travel opens to me only at the price which I pay for it, I declare I have chosen.

To consider insignificant whatever is inevitable. To put as much distance as possible between what happens and myself.

I am dead and I see things again after centuries in the tomb.

*Saturday, November 28*

The elevation of one's being to its highest pitch of perfection, and the attempt to determine in one's self what the human will can obtain. Why is this programme left to the Saints?

My sole brake will be an extreme attention to my development *equally in all directions*.

There are saints, philosophers, men of letters, scientists, worldlings, artists. I do not choose in life, I have need of all its resources. I shall experi-

ence everything and I am even willing—I want even—to have had, or to have still further disagreeable experiences, provided I am not held too long in any one of them.

If the moment comes to break the balance, I shall know what I am doing.

## 1897

*Thursday, January 21*

It is a written prayer I want to offer You, my God! I have tried to read, but nothing meets my mood.

If You are what my religion has taught me You are, You will grant me this life which I seek so laboriously. If You are another God, listen to me even so, since I am prepared for all extremities, and this make good instruments.

But it is by You, my God, whom I know, that I should wish to be heard. I have no virtues and none too much faith. Only I am tortured, and what courage that imparts!

I want to live, my God! And each passing day—a shadow more sombre on my soul—I regard as a renewal of the pact which binds us, whereby You have snatched me from childhood, from youth, from happiness, and in virtue of which You can no longer treat me either as a child, as a woman, or even as an ordinary creature, since nothing on earth is made for me.

For this is indeed the absolute ordeal, the one which breaks all the ties of a destiny with the past and the future, which alters everything, which separates from everything, the greatest cause of isolation after death—perhaps greater than death, even.

Well, my God, You who know all this, who know with what disgust I go forward to the future which I cannot think of without a physical feeling of despair, grant me, not perhaps the one thing which I desire, but the only one I want to ask of You—grant me the understanding of what You wish me to be!

And, whatever may be my disappointments, my moments of weariness, my wasted efforts, I promise You at least absolute indifference as to that which was not meant for me, complete and final disregard for that which was not to be mine.

*Saturday, February 27*

To write little and to live little—one and the same thing for me.

Try as I may, I set badly to work. This perpetual stiffening process determines atrocious reactions. I expend an enormous amount of will to very little end. This work, revolving always about myself, harrasses me and disgusts me. . . .

*Tuesday, May 4*

I have certainly thought of writing. It is the first impulse of those who have lived a little more

rapidly than their fellows, and a little differerently. And it is doing something! When circumstances have given us a certain violence of will, we find ourselves singularly embarrassed by it!

Ardent, implacable work would in that case have its *raison d'être,* the results would spread. Then, finally, the aesthetic enjoyment, wishing ever more perfect, more sincere, stronger and suppler the language which translates your substance—there is something in that.

But I have dreamed of more. Such a career is already no longer serious enough for me.

*Wednesday, June 2, 1897*

I am twenty-two.

*Sunday, June 20*

I adore goodness and I am not good, because in my independence and my perpetual *antipanurgisme,*[1] I despise the somewhat trivial proofs people are accustomed to give of it. Yet I am better than I appear to be, with my imperturbable criticism; and, when I see good souls indulgent through conventionality or fear of public opinion, I resent their being better than my disdainful indifference makes me seem.

I must return to Saint Theresa's system which is so easy and simple, having at least the merit of edification: Never say the slightest evil of anyone.

[1] Word derived from the name of Rabelais' character, Panurge. Tr.

*1897, Brutul, July 23*

Said thirty beads of my rosary while walking in the fields. It is hard for me to go further. If I could pray otherwise I should not force myself to it. Yet I do not believe that a prayer is ever hackneyed, even when it is oral. It is always worthy of the intention which prompts it.

The rosary is, for me, an act of faith and of will. I do not wish my prayer to be at the mercy of my intellectual impressions.

Words—even those which we forget—maintain the soul in a state of prayer, constitute a veritable guide-rope. Then this constant repetition of the same words gives a very strong and, as it were, physical impression of prayer. One hears one's self supplicating.

"Prayer-machine" which, even while it directs the design, leaves it a greater liberty than in the case of more special prayers: Bossuet's formula for self-abandonment, Saint Thomas Aquinas at the Holy Communion, Pascal in time of sickness.

Although I have little liking for it, the rosary may be more personal and meditative. "Though you say it over eternally, you never repeat it."

*Brest, September 27*

Let us draw near to God ever so little, a breath of strong moral life stirs within us. Everything seems possible, everything seems bearable. Albert

de la Ferronays was right. "Habits influence us more than any principles."

The habits which mould our lives should not be at the mercy of our intellectual vicissitudes. We should act as we should like to think, as we should like to feel. It is a way of casting into the scales one's sword and one's buckler.

At these weekday masses—earlier than the others, and the only ones that are really religious—I feel the coming of a freer, clearer acceptance. I ask to respect my ordeal, to wear it like a nun's veil which one fears to defile by whatever is too vain. God has not consulted me, He has not awaited the "yes" of my vows, He has made me a Carmelite, in the full rigor of seclusion and of silence. May the spirit of Saint Theresa be granted me!

I still defend myself and I shall long continue to defend myself. May God deign to hear me. Would that all were as deep and sure in me. . . .

Moderate happiness, moderate virtues disgust me; but it is not these harmless endeavors that we should propose ourselves. An alternative, to be genuine, ought to present two terms worthy of being weighed against each other. Whoever abandons the world because he has been unable to see anything attractive in it, does not know the value of the independence of free choice.

What one should know, what one should make sure of, is this: in a certain imagined situation, in a certain combination of circumstances, as excep-

tional as you like, yet *conceivable*, will your choice not waver?

So long as one is not sure of his response to this, there are chances that the sacrifice may be the scum of necessity. So long as we have not envisaged the temptation in its highest degree, it is not "the world" which we sacrifice, but the measure in which it has offered itself which we disdain.

What a fine thing to abandon for God one's probable future! What a fine thing to hold cheap one's possessions! It is not at a bargain that I want to acquire my immortality, and I should blush to have another, were he an emperor abdicating his throne, show himself a better purchaser than I.

*Sunday, October 24*

For some time a thing has struck me: There are many types of moral beauty, some of which are more fascinating than the Christian ideal. I have always loved violence, and pride is a law of aesthetics. Well, Jesus Christ knew better. I have never been moved to tears, I have never suffered from a sense of my inferiority, save in the presence of Christian virtues. In them there is a supreme degree of sincerity, the simplification of death.

The being who is obliged to die in the humiliating circumstances of the last struggle, is always somewhat ridiculous when he lacks the Christian attitude. This sweetness and this humility, which

do not fill me with enthusiasm, are inseparable from the high seriousness of abnegation.

In my reading, I have never wept except from enthusiasm—once over the entrance of the *Grande Armée* into Berlin—the author had no talent—again, over a letter by Abbé Perreyve deeply moved by his first confession, by the homage and the example of his penitent. He had just confessed Père Lacordaire! I went to lean on the mantlepiece in order to sob more freely. Why? I was fifteen. So many others, more religious than I, will not have been moved by this passage. . . . O Christian verity!

Père Lacordaire! What speech and what life. . . . It is thanks to their eloquence that I have loved to suffer when I had to.

## 1898

*January 10, 1898*

Another year. God still willing, I abandon it to Him with all the sincerity of which I am capable.

It is not to make myself more resigned than I am. *I do not want to be resigned.* I shall perhaps sacrifice myself some day, I shall be resigned never. I do not wish to remain passive, even with suffering.

The life of a happy woman is impossible for me. I must invent another life in which these frightful years can hold a place. Since I have fared so far,

let me at least keep to the road on which I have made some progress.

*Monday, March 17, 98*

Drove to the river with Mama. The harbour was blue and it was magnificently cold. Came back and read, by the golden light of the curtains, the life of Nathalie Narishkine. For ten years, in the seminary of the Rue du Bac, she wrote, in all languages, to the nuns of her order throughout the world; and when her brother-in-law, the Austrian admiral, set out on a cruise with his country's squadrons, he discovered that Sister Nathalie was known everywhere: the post of a Cardinal Secretary-of-State. She had a friend, a nun at Vienna. They had made the sacrifice of never seeking to see each other again, when a chance brought them together on the opposite sides of a grating. One cried, the other laughed. "If there is little love on earth, it is less because hearts refuse to love, than because the majority of human beings refuse to deserve love." (*Père Gratry.*)

*March 9*

The most discouraging punishment God could inflict upon me would be to cure me today. The one thing I can say for myself is that, at the moments of greatest fatigue, something has always held me attached to this ordeal; and, had I been offered the means of being delivered from it, forth-

with, I should have reflected a good deal before accepting.

God has opened wide to me the gates of the intelligible and higher world. Just how far have I ventured?

*Friday, March 18*

All my hours of lassitude and of prostration, the work which disgusts, the fatigue of the rule, the isolation, the boredom—I must remind myself that all this forms part of my programme. "These acceptances are not vain phrases. God takes us at our word." Have I myself not wanted to feel in all its details, "in all its circumstances and its accessories," the root of my suffering? . . .

*Good Friday*

We are fickle, even towards our misfortune, let it last ever so little. It is only when we suffer our suffering to the full, that we decide at last to seek an appropriate remedy, and that we feel ourselves balked by all the rest. Woe to them who are consoled!

We are so tenacious for this world, we cling so closely to all its branches, that we must learn despair like detachment.

*April 18*

I am made for Plato's pride and not for that of Diogènes; and yet, always in the Christian way, I

have been held back by the uncompromising attitude of "all or nothing." At the beginning, the superiority of the Holy Virgin sapped my enthusiasm for perfection. I copied, so as to have them under my eyes, the stimulating passages. "God leads souls, with different graces, to an equal perfection"—"were there today souls which had more love for me than the saints of the past ages, I should accord them greater graces." Yet I was perspicacious enough to see that I was on the wrong track.

My God, You would detest perfection if it caused us to be occupied only with ourselves. Its sole end is to create in us free movements to go to You.

*April 23*

Read Eugénie de Guérin. She owes everything to her contemplative development—even, I believe, her great love for Maurice. But her distaff! Affectation and uselessness! Sad symbol of the litle that is expected of woman. What has she not been commanded to study in the name of God! She is right. "There was something there," and yet the *Journal* run a thin stream.

One thing strikes me in her. I have encountered it elsewhere and I do not understand. It is that, finding a virtuous happiness, one instals himself in it and accounts his happiness a virtue. We must be unhappy to a certain extent.

*Thursday, May 5*

I write in my bad moments when, at any cost, I must react. Then, I take my flight. I need to set dates, to see somewhere the trace of all this invisible travail which is my life and which passes so deep down, so unexpressed, that it gives me the giddiness caused by solitude.

God consoles us for everything, by the simple fact of His existence. Blasphemy is a form of nonsense fit for fools and the heedless. . . . I, infinitesimal microbe, with my conveniences, what do I prove?

*July 22*

I have finished the *Vie de Jésus*. I have quarrelled with it step by step. In several months I shall know the definite impression. It is always like that. I await the counter-shock of my reading—surgical expression—

On the other hand, the famous style did not take me off my feet. It is naïvely perfect, and I am always conscious, between it and me, of that indefinable thing called *tone*. Well, this tone has the ecclesiastical abundance, the easy, flowery flow of an oratorical and slightly conceited curate. It gives me the impression of a voice speaking too quickly.

*Brutul, 29 July*

Walked a long time in the lily alley. I shall never give in, I shall always want everything. I need to prefer my life in order to accept it.

*Thursday, August 4*

How beautiful light is, and how our soul basks in it. It is an awakening to be able to lift the head, to open the eyes in more light, to feel them bathed in more space. I seize once again the birds in their flight and the beating of their wings is a novelty for me. The stars come back to me, one by one. I have already all the great constellations, but in their dark casket of the night and long since aflame. I watch for them white in the twilight. I have had the melancholy of recognizing them thus, on a canvas, at the last Salon.

But what I await, what I am on the watch for, is the pure contour of the moon. I see it, always reeking with a nimbus of four rays, like the arms of a wind-mill, such as Moreau gives his apparitions.

O things, how I shall look at you!

*August 7*

God knows with what emotion I ask to be entirely myself once more. It is the first time, I believe, for ten years, that I pray simply and violently to be cured, and to be cured at once, while there is yet time. My God, confound me by making me well!

I might still be able to say that I regret nothing, that I love the mould into which I have been run, but provided it releases me! Provided I escape from its nightmare pressure upon me!

*Tuesday, August 9*

I live only by anticipation, by all the uncertainty of my hopes. Literally, I count the hours. Looking at my watch, turning the leaves of the calendar, it is always, always with this thought, that I approach a future less intolerable. "I have walked so long I should be almost there."

Oh! at present, I no longer have the martyr's calling, or anything of my Jansenist acceptance. I want passionately to be cured.

*August 13*

What almost makes me despair is that, having admired the force of the Catholic arguments, I still beat my wings in resistance. Is it because I am still so "marvellously corporeal" that arguments are not sufficiently persuasive? Malebranche will do me good.

And then, when one is plunged into the blackness of life and one has become accustomed to it, it is hard to take into account this vocation for happiness, the basis of all religion.

Something, moreover, in the peculiar character of my infirmity, influences all this inward travail: the isolation, so special and inhuman—in the precise sense—due to the absence of sound. Of all perceptions sound is that which puts us most closely in contact with life. I am now persuaded that, from this point of view, light is not comparable to it. It is inanimate matter, it is *mineral*, while sound.

voice, are animal, human. There are great voices in inorganic nature; but the living ear is needed for a single thing to be stirred by it. Light, even when eyes do not perceive it, still has its role of fecundity. Sound is the most useless thing in the universe, being made for the soul which alone listens.

I believe it is easier for a blind man to be spiritualistic, than for one who is deaf.

*Sunday, 13*

"It is your business to play well the part assigned you; but to choose it is another's."

*Monday 14*

I hold to observances. I do not know just how far I am a Christian, but my religion is this: horror of slovenliness. For me, life is merely a beautiful movement. Now the majority of those who believe, lack devoutness through stagnation. I want my life to go as far as my thought. I prefer to have it go farther, even. Both prayer and the sacraments introduce a superb order into a life.

Furthermore, if I am Pyrrhonean, I do not wish to be catalogued as a free-thinker in the minds of others.

Evidently I have the right to spare myself the associations of ideas which displease me. "Deceive them, then, but don't lie to them."

*November 27*

I wish passionately to be cured. And yet, the day I became like other people once more, would I

be sure of being wholly myself? "Suffering is a companion"; and when it is not unbearable, when it does not crush the soul as well as the body, when one must live by it, not die of it, it has its magnetism. I believe it becomes as seductive as a vice. There is in our nature a violent partiality for melancholy, for all that serves as an excuse for sadness; and happiness always involves a trifle of bewilderment. How shall we break ourselves of the habit of melancholy in heaven? Hell will be there to preserve it for us.

*December 4*

How shall I understand, if I escape from it some day, this mixture of scepticism and deliberate religion? I pray and do not hope. I await in vain and am not disapointed. Is it perhaps indifference?

I begin to believe that it is not so hard as one thinks to lose interest in one's self and to see annihilation approach with scarcely a regret for the being that one was. Personality is a prejudice one succeeds in losing. We exist only by effort. We all experience Fontenelle's difficulty in being.

Happiness and perfection?

It is not their impossibility but their inadequacy which halts us. . . . Who is not seriously afraid of Paradise? If we had only to wish our felicity, how should we go to work? I am not even thinking of the obstacles offered by this world. I say that we do not know how to imagine happiness.

Then, what becomes unbearable for me now is

not the immediate consequences of my infirmities; it is the habit of sadness. I have a physical need of joy, of exuberance, of being young. This inveterate sadness asphyxiates me! I am poisoned by a hospital atmosphere.

*Wednesday*

Is it not true that what you lose is less what has been than what might have been, and that the worst in farewells is the feeling that all has not been said? I enhance my sacrifice with all that was due me, and that no one suspects me of having lost.

*Brest, July 26*

When we regard our lives from the point of view of others, blotting out the ambitions which render them tolerable, we shudder at their abjectness.

Never shall I give in. Others in my place would resign themselves through dulness, would believe in impossibility. These ten years of horror haunt me, on the contrary. They excite me.

I see two futures only: a stall in the choir of a Benedictine abbey, or else one of those great talents which confer all the peerages. A makeshift, this last! But it is not easy to about-face and find the equivalent of high holiness.

*July 29*

This faculty of imagining immediately what might be, what should have been, side by side

with what is, is so abnormally developed in me that I do not hesitate to declare it my peculiar property. Thence, extreme "fastidiousness" [1] of judgment and of taste. It is not my idea to be satisfied with a thing before having examined the other possibilities, before knowing its relative value. I want to know *just how much better it is*. The criterion of the value of a thing and of a being being, moreover, but the scale of its superiority, I love that only which I prefer. And it is to make sure of my preferences that I criticize so furiously.

I declare that I have no pride. I should be much easier in my mind if I had. Besides, I am not quite clear precisely in what pride consists. It is for me one of those obscure sins, like certain others which exist, and from which I shall be preserved through ignorance.

Haughtiness, yes, and through conviction. It goes so far that the absence of haughtiness annoys me in others; but this is a matter of epidermis and of worldly bearing.

I have no need of outbursts, of confidences. When I chance to sin in this respect, there ensues a sense of uneasiness, a discontent, an inability to recover my integrity, an antipathy for the accomplices of my clumsiness. What consoles me is that I talk fairly lightly of what I feel most, and no one knows just how far I have betrayed myself.

[1] In English. Tr.

We exaggerate in our own minds all that we say.

*Sunday 29*

Is it possible I am heartless? It has taken so much to make me invulnerable that, in every circumstance, without exception, I am frightened by my detachment.

## 1899

*Monday, January 30*

I regret music like some one dead.

Ah! how the old songs we sang when we were twelve. . . .

I believe that my memory is remarkable in this respect. I have not lost a bar of what I have heard. I keep the scale very correctly and, with a little trouble, I could easily recover the chromatic, next all the arpeggios, the isolated note. . . . Then I should read music like one more language.

Young girls are taught to despise everything, to console themselves for everything: beauty, fortune, ambition, love. They have not even left them the exaltation of piety. They are taught every-day devotion, "that which does not require state-occasions," without suspecting that theirs is perhaps not the devotion which other people need.

But, at least, if you make them despise everything, it is in virtue of something? Not at all; for they also despise, or rather misinterpret, the perfect

expression of their own ideal: the religious life. O Jesus! Only begotten Son, equal to the Father who, with the Consoling Spirit, reigneth for ages of ages!

*Thursday, February 2*

I had not yet read Marie Bashkirtseff. I don't know why. I love her, although we are different. In the first place, my own originality is a catastrophe.

She was always intent on "glory."

As for me, I believed I was making a bad bargain with holiness; but I did not seek it the more remissly on that account. I was a Jansenist to such extent that I ate apricots when I had toothache, since I could not ostensibly refuse all the desserts.

An artist's glory would always have seemed miserable in my eyes. Even today, I should want notoriety rather for the sake of illustrious sympathies than for fame.

I am told that Marie Bashkirtseff resembled me physically. Perhaps—the same full cheeks and the same animated look.

*Sunday, February 5*

What can we do to live enough each day? These last years I believed in my studies. I had to have them. Besides, they were then capable of constituting *my work*. Now it is too little. I need a frightful amount to do. To stop is to halt in despair. Where shall I find something worthy of such application!

Writing? Try as I may, a time will come when I shall no longer be able to avoid it.

There is absolutely nothing in my life. It takes an infinite art for me to occupy myself with my resources, with my studies. Not only am I bored, *but my boredom never ceases.*

Writing has always seemed to me the sacrifice of the woman to the author. Well, the woman is lost for me. It is a matter of saving what is left!

*Saturday, February 11*

I return from X's marriage. . . . She and he equally tall, elegant and smart. A procession of wellclad women in the noble uniformity of black mourning.

If we were sincere, we would confess that money is half of happiness. It does so much to embellish it!

*Saturday, February 18*

Yesterday evening I slipped behind a curtain in the dining-room, and stayed there to saturate myself with the moonlight. I ardently demanded all the happiness I could imagine. Ah! nowadays I no longer believe myself vulgar when I ask for happiness! We count on it more or less; but we should make ourselves a magnificent image of it, and wish for it passionately. This world is perhaps bankrupt. Let us at least lose in it high desires!

I asked to have my youth back again, my fine eyes, music and my wit. I asked for beauty, talent,

wealth, glory, "that brilliant weed of happiness," love, friendship, the adventures which speed up existence—all, in short, that is life and that cannot be dispensed with without suffering or boredom.

And yet, having nothing would still be a fine thing, like the visible and haughty mourning of cloistered lives. I could have lived more than you, better than you, and I have not lived. "You are a sword without a hilt, pure and shining, which no hand has ever brandished." Well, uselessness is a consecration. I shall live in my immobility more than a hundred others in their movement. I shall live in my solitude more than a thousand others in their loves. I shall fashion myself forms of happiness so strange, so new and so proud that I shall spurn the other forms, familiar and vulgar like garments no longer fresh, which have been worn before.

*Wednesday, February 22*

I did not go out, and I read all the morning and all day. Thus do I let the hours slip peacefully by. They give me all they can. I prepare the future and don't bother about the present.

Life is superb. It is only for the Philistines that it is not exalting. When I am carried along by my work, as on a living, rolling wave, I feel young, fresh, supple, as after a good gymnastic exercise. Work! To extend one's soul and one's life over the realm of the Infinite.

*Saturday, 25*

I am content! Am I then about to know joy once more? Let us not probe too deep. . . . I am content in the Latin sense, and provisionally, it is true!

I arise feverishly. Dressing, which I love, martyrizes me, however, because it represents an hour and a half's obstacle between my work and me.

Everything that I do not give to my mental training—the time taken from me by others, the slowness of movements, distances to be covered—all these things rob me, steal the future from me.

*Tuesday, 28*

I want, I want, I want. . . . But let us see rather what I do. My languages: Latin. I reread Cicero's letters. What great lords those republicans were! Life at Rome was like that of an English nobleman on his estate. They sent their slaves with letters overseas, to Africa, to Asia. . . . And I get along slowly with Tacitus, carefully sifting each phrase for any hidden meaning it may hold for me. I love this fine, intelligent, plastic language. I speak of Latin in general.

In German, I read the text of my painters' albums: Something really too bad about Vinci. To have been a world of thoughts and sensations, to have had the religion of "all in self," never to have imposed upon one's self the insult of an

abstention. . . . And all this, with the same bearing, the same loftiness, the same authority as an ascetic.

Italian, d'Annunzio.

In English, often Shelley, *To a Skylark* and *The Recollection.*

For heavy artillery, *The Origin of Species.* The devil of a book.

*Monday, March 13*

What fills me with despair, when I am there at my table, in a charming light gilded by the curtains, with long hours before me and a fever for work, is never to have found the adequate effort, the labour which would had led me to the limit of my forces. How joyfully I should leave it broken!

I shall soon be twenty-four, and I must always postpone life. Today I have the grippe. When I believed, I loved my secondary ailments. I hoped that they payed for the others. During my long typhoid I had the enthusiasm of workers who gladly put in double time. Now, I am inconsolable for a day spoiled by a headache.

*Saturday*

Too sick to work, I have lost my time.

Mama had a letter: "Don't let your daughter tire herself too much with so many studies!" What do they want me to do with my health? Health is of use only to those who are happy. I

certainly keep it for the future, but I am not going to sacrifice that to it.

To be happy, one must always have been so. I am not resigned to the past, I do not want to regret anything in it. I want to carry all my years along with me in my orbit and let no one of them break the harmony. Life is too short to be cut up into pieces. We have no time to change, still less to repent. I do not like things which are acquired, and which have to be waited for. We have no time to hope.

*Sunday*

Judged by my journal, I seem like a person very hard to get on with. It is because here, it is the "Kritik der reinen Vernunft." My practical reason is so well-behaved, so docile and so prompt to make the best of things! There are times when it amazes me. Let a chimney fall on my head, and I scarcely think "ouf!"

I experience a singular inward excitement, as if responding to a provocation. Without words, to be sure, and mechanically. Montaigne is right, our best resources lie in instinct. Ah! the human animal is a fine adaptation. He has happiness firmly rooted in him!

Those strong minds who quarrel with God because he is too human! Where do they get their extra-human notion of Divinity?

There are no vile things. There are only base beings.

The Fontenellism of my emotions comes, I believe, from the fact that I am a determinate being. I have seen Destiny come and I have accepted it, being unable to do otherwise. I know what is due the inevitable. I would almost say that this is indifferent to me, like something which does not concern me. And it is curious to note how quickly that which is accepted assumes the aspect of a thing of the past.

I have terrible inward protests. I am very skilful in torturing myself and, at the same time, I enjoy many strange things. I believe, God forgive me, I should relish the extraordinary sensation of falling through space.

*Thursday, March 23*

Awaking is particularly difficult. I keep my eyes closed a long time and I recall life, the real life, which was mine for fourteen years, and which has left me more memories than the other.

I think that I am awaking to it at last, that I am going to hear the jumble of noises in the Rue de Siam,[1] the gunboat whistles, the firing of salutes, the chambermaid's voice.

Evening is the only hour I love. Night is the passage from the present to the future. I fling myself madly into combinations. My imagination exhausts all the possibilities for me.

It is the imagination which makes the world's

[1] The principal street of Brest.

greatest interpreters, scientists or poets. One creates a hypothesis, just as one creates a myth, an allegory, a metaphor.

Reading Darwin, I was struck by that *preliminary state*, that life which precedes. This artistic faculty has nothing anti-scientific. It is intuition. It has preceded all discoveries.

In no sphere is imagination contemptible. Christians owe it their greatest saints. Since it is a system of optics, it is half of taking. And we exist in the degree in which we take.

*April 7*

Suffocation under such a mass of accumulated reading, need of replying; in short, revenge of personality. Nomi.or quia leo! and the terror of an insufficient output.

For the rest, it is not "glory," as in the case of Marie Bashkirtseff, which disturbs from afar. "Glory" does not embellish the woman, and I do not wish to sacrifice her.

I want a talent which shall be me, shall distinguish me, reveal me to a few—to those alone who count for me. A talent which shall complete me, receive my intimate life and amplify it, and through which I can expend all my contemplative ardour, my will for hard work—a talent which shall absorb my time and my effort, my courage and my spleen.

But I shall always much rather be inimitable

by my way of wearing a dress by Chevert, than by all the talent and all the ugliness of the Eliots and of the Staëls.

I want to put the whiteness of the foam into my soul. I have looked at it so long today! In the cemetery at Plougonvelin [1] I felt that one could die there—die avenged and consoled by the spectacle borne away.

Elsewhere, men are buried deep. It is only by the sea that we come up again to the surface.

Today the wind blows furiously. In spite of the cold and the sand-storm, I went three times, and shall go again, to see the waves, as to a chapel during retreat.

*April*

Yesterday the face of the sea was disfigured. It spat foam the whole length of that enormous jaw which comes to bite into our bay, a crescent of spume. One would have said that, on all these beaches, lips were drawing back in a snarl, and showing their teeth eternally.

. . . .

"He notes first that sorrow made him more distrustful with regard to life, more refractory to all the consoling or decorative illusions with which those, for whom existence is clement, are easily contented. 'I doubt,' says he, 'whether suffering makes us better, but I know that it makes us

[1] Near Brest.

deeper.'" *La philosophie de Nietzsche.* Lichtenberger.

*Friday, April 14*

I love life, I love life prodigiously. Everything in it intoxicates me. I feel increasing the fever which it gives me. I move in this life with a lightheartedness which fills me to overflowing. It is impossible for me to curb the vivacity of my movements, the energy of my speech, the provocation of my look—everything which affirms my triumph in existing. If I see myself in a mirror, I seem to be bringing myself some mysterious and intoxicating news. I open wide the doors before me, I come and go with the rhythmic movement of a waltz. Henceforth, I feel my life will hold for me, to the very end, the enchantments and surprises of a convalescence.

Whatever my life may be, I declare that I shall die reconciled with it.

*Saturday, April 18*

To judge people with indulgence, "put yourself in their place." Precisely what you should not do. There is no reason to require of others what we are in the habit of expecting of ourselves. It is supposed that this renders us more accommodating. No doubt, were I Parmenion!

*Sunday*

Forgotten sensations return to me in a throng. There is but one word—it is already a convales-

cence, and due solely to the continued progress, so rigorously graduated, of my eyes. A little more light on the optic nerve, so much soul gained! I do not believe that my ears will be cured. I do not want to count on it; and yet, sometimes, there comes to me an absolutely instinctive certitude of cure. Evidently I destroy this when I become conscious of it; but, during the second of passiveness, the assurance is so complete as to banish even impatience.

I have wondered whether it were not a gleam of intuition revealing that nervous all-powerfulness which accomplishes the miracle of auto-suggestion. Have I not imagined that my ears could hear, but that I—*I*—was no longer aware of it? It is always the same thing, "*who knows the mysteries of the will with its vigour?*"[1]

*Tuesday 18*

The weather is very fine and I was unable to go out because I do not want to pay calls with Mama. So I had recourse to my customary "spacing," opened the folding doors and walked in the bedroom and parlor, watch in hand, for an hour. It is the prisoner's hygiene. Madame Elizabeth imposed it upon Madame Royale in the Temple. No one will ever know all the sacrifices I make to my "Vollkommenheit." I cannot resign myself to being a failure as a woman, broken, destroyed.

So I walked and thought for an hour. It is at

[1] In English. Tr.

such moments that I get started. I want each hour to carry me, like a wave, a little further than I was before. I am patient only at this price.

In spite of everything, I shall have come to an Englishwoman. It used to irritate me to go out with them, since they felt obliged to talk to me all the time and immobilized my eyes. No human speech makes up for the bondage of the eyes.

*Saturday 29*

If we are the masters of the world, we are also its guests. Young animals always inspire me with a hospitable impulse. New servants also. "Not only should we not harm others, but we should spoil them, console them."

*Tuesday, May 3*

I am eager for Italy, and for many other things, but I want to see nothing. I do not want to be confronted now with what I shall love. I keep it safe for myself. I understand Marie Bashkirtseff: "It is like a great definitive happiness."

I have not yet succeeded in understanding what has happened. Being deaf still produces upon me the effect of a novelty. And always moments of that astonishing gaiety "which ought to last indefinitely, since it is founded on nothing."

*Sunday, May 7*

Are books perhaps bad? In the first place, they are excitants, but not excitants to action. They

disgust you with thinking, with saying the same thing over for six thousand years, allowing for slight differences of language.

Finished Madame Geoffrin. Sad life, all told, compared with Mme. Swetchine's.

Should one lose everything, with Faith—even charming friendships? The XVIIIth century was decidedly not an affectionate century, and we forgive the reaction of "sensibility" which ended it. For my part, I always had a secret partiality for the attachments of scoundrels, and I still believe they must love each other more desperately than other people.

Reread the *Prière sur l'Acropole*, passed from Renan to Vigny: *La Mort du Loup, Moïse, Le Mont des Oliviers.* Also reread an article by Gregh on Rodenbach.

I am tired of hearing life wept over. It ought frankly to have ceased to astonish us. I experience the same impatience as that given me by the devout: "The world, the world. . . ." And this life must have given us a certain idea of felicity, for us to suffer so much because we are not happy, for the thing to be so disagreeable to us.

I see life without reason, without hope, without mercy, and I love it because, in the last analysis, it is all we possess. And then, it lasts so short a time!

Suicides are people in great hurry to arrive.

As for impassibility and the love of annihilation,

Stoicism, Buddhism, philosophy of fear! Death is not worth being made an obsession of. It is in its place at the end of life. Let us leave it there.

Illusion for illusion, I prefer the brilliant illusion, and especially the passionate illusion.

As for peace, it is a joy which those who summon it must, I hope for them, imagine very badly. Always the suppression of suffering. Human beings go no further!

*Vannes, March 23*

I attach an immense importance to the physical aspect. "She is very ugly, but she is a good girl." When this is said, I am as mistrustful of the moral as of the physical. It is less easy to judge in the first place, and I believe it gains thereby. And then, morally, mediocrity suffices. I am, I believe, distinctly heretical, Pelagian. I am persuaded that Nature makes or mars beings throughout. Always to oppose moral beauty to physical beauty, is to believe the first more common than the second, and less difficult for the soul than for the body.

*Vannes, Sunday, May 27*

I read feverishly an article by Camille Ballaigue on the nine symphonies. Music is a dead part of myself which I cannot get rid of. The names of Bach, Beethoven, César Franck, Wagner stir up black moods in me. Deafness is a moral torture which I have not yet seen the bottom of. A blind man loses his body, a deaf man his soul.

Silence, to this degree, is not self-communion. It is fainting and vertigo. The least noise would render me more aware of myself than all that which I see and touch.

I have days of apsychia; and, if I have not even the illusion of wishing to die, it is because I am partly dead already.

Days when the impossibility of living is flagrant, when following the talking fingers frets me to the point of tears, when reading lacerates me as if I stoned myself with others' thoughts, when solitude is disintegration in the void, when I lose my atoms and, together with all this, a dull nightmare sensitiveness, and tears in the blood.

I shall date my life from that day only, when, shut up in my room alone before an Erard grand, I shall ask music to give me back my soul. It is a symphony by Beethoven in *C* minor that I assign to that day.

Why do we love to wish for what we do not hope?

*June 2, 99*

Twenty-four years old. . . . I am tired of being myself. Ah! let us speak no more of it.

My God, what will You give me for my twenty-fourth birthday?

I read an article on Solesmes in the *Revue des Deux-Mondes*. Why are not all catholic women nuns? They are told that it is the most perfect thing for them, and they go elsewhere. . . .

Marchand is received as a sovereign. We may despise "glory"—"we despise many things to keep from despising ourselves"; but it is a difficult attainment, hence a form of excellence. Ah! I prefer those who succeed, who surpass, the "aptest," even a dressmaker, or a perfumer.

*Lorient, June 12*

Lemaître in his article, "De l'influence des littératures du Nord," does not believe it is possible to seize all the shades of another tongue. He can't be a polyglot.

Style is a rhythm in itself, like music. It is neither German, nor French, nor English. That is to say, like music, it is immediately perceptible to the mind.

The best way to penetrate a foreign literature remains to have a good grasp upon one's own. There is no reason why we should not feel, with the aid of German words, what we feel with the aid of French words. We understand by listening, unless we have no ear; but, having an ear for Lamartine, it would be hard not to have one for Heine, for Shelley, for d'Annunzio.

*June 13*

We should never say "ouf!" to commonplace people. Imbeciles are convex and asses concave. Let us pay no attention to them!

And then these people never laugh. To laugh or

to smile is to reveal what amuses us—the most significant thing in the world—and one should be very sure of himself to betray himself thus. Moreover, laughter is a welcome, an approbation, an act of politeness, something eminently aristocratic and worldly—to a certain extent the prerogative of the sovereign right of the mind. I do not like happy people, but I hate and despise those who are sad.

*Friday, June 16*

What I read this morning in Amiel: "Who does justice to gaiety? Sad souls. They know that gaiety is buoyancy and vigor."

I do not like socialism and, like the Prince de Ligne, ask nothing better than to be an abuse of the present. I have an infinite liking for luxury, but I have all the prejudices regarding it, or, rather, all the Oriental tact. It sickens me, it gives me a sense of outrage when, dressed to go out, I pass a workman looking grave and tired. Let luxury be an intimate, invisible atmosphere. I have read that, somewhere or other, the houses of the rich were exactly like those of the poor and that, on the threshold, you would have given alms to their owners. A very proud way of lacking vanity.

*June 20*

I am so nervous, so saturated with boredom, indifferent to everything. . . . I read eight hours a day and feel listless. There are moments when

I doubt nothing. Others, by their emptiness, should kill me, like a hole in the soul, a fall in time.

*Brutul, June 23*

When you have been reading lives, "journals," a melancholy seizes you: always the end by torture. It is the only thing to drive us from this world. . . .

When I say melancholy!

I am tired of a school-girl's toil. You should know all you want to know before twenty. Afterwards, to breathe, to see, to hear and, above all, to do nothing! I hate people of whom I am told "that they don't lose a minute," "she must always have some work in hand." Ah! to know how to do nothing. . . .

When people see me in an armchair, or sitting quietly in a railway carriage, they are amazed: "You are sick?" On the contrary! it is because my pure vitality suffices me, that I take no remedies.

So, my books lapidate me and then, great God, what?

It is essential for me to have talent.

I have tried to write something, no matter what, to get my hand in. At the end of an hour and a half, there were two pages of this writing, one of which was crossed out. I found myself so sincerely maladroit that it cast a bucket of cold water over me.

What disappears with hearing is not the note, which I have kept quite correct. One day, they were

trying to determine the note given by a certain crystal when struck. I said at once that it must be *mi*, and I was right. What disappears is the resonance, the sonority; not the memory, but the emotion of sound.

I must try to get back the vibration, something other than the dull memory of noises. Nothing worse can happen than that which has happened to me, and the way it has happened. A luxurious suffering which one does not die of, which does not exempt from other sorts.

*Monday, June 26*

My favorite sky: when it is blue with a whole archipelago of great white clouds, as though strewn with fleur-de-lys, reminding me of the past, history, old France. My favorite tree, on other than aesthetic grounds also, instinctive attraction: the pine. There are finer trees, but I never see this without a moral delight. I find it interesting under any sky. I love cedars and cypresses in much the same way. In short, not the domestic trees, the wild trees, the trees of solitary places.

I prefer the mountains to the sea, without hesitation. The absence of vegetable life and the excessive light of the sea cause spiritual drought. It is a contemplative error to believe that the sea gives the sentiment of the infinite. It is a plain. It is mathematically the minimum of horizon, and its curve reminds us that the planet extends only as

it falls and rolls itself up in a ball. Mountains are much more religious, more sacred, because more useless. Waters are the commercial highway, and the shores of the sea swarm with civilization. With their forests, their animals, their glaciers, their lakes, their running waters, their storms and all their atmospheric rarities, the mountains decidedly take the palm.

It is the constant presence of the mountains throughout that has given me such a liking for Ouida's *Wanda*, the only badly written book I was ever attached to. Mountain books are deeper than sea books. Nietzsche is a mountain poet.

Books, books—the one thing in the world which has come to my aid. In the long run it renders us terribly proud always to do without our fellows!

Perhaps I have myself exaggerated the gulf. I have so often said that I was all right as I am, that it was impossible for another to judge by putting himself in my place, that I know no one whose lot I would have chosen for myself. . . . A priest from Béziers, at Mme. L . . . 's, told me he would refer to me in a sermon. Instead of approving of me, people ought to hate me for these little graces.

It is agreed that we behave well towards our family when we spare them every species of complaint. This is false. I should give proof of more sociability, if I rolled on the ground before them.

But do you see the panic if I sobbed on the carpet?

*Brutul, July 2*

The open air has a clearness, an emptiness which attracts like an abyss. Things stand up quite pure in it, as though fresh from a bath. It recalls an autumn day, the gaiety of the first cold weather. I adore the cold.

I have just received d'Annunzio's *Elégies Romanes*. I have been reading and rereading them for twenty-four hours. They are adorably lulling, with a voluptuous bitter taste.

*Nulla é piri grande e sacro*
*Ha in se la luce d'un astro.*

I saw at once that the question for me became one of history and that, if I was to be reassured, it would be by facts. But it is precisely there that I have encountered the greatest difficulties. Should we then agree with Pascal: "We must not convince the infidels, and they cannot convince us; but, by this very means, we shall convince them, since we say that there is no conviction in the whole conduct of J. C., on one side or the other"?

*Brutul, July 29*

I could not decide to come in out of the garden. This month which I have passed here regularly at the same season for so many years, gives something liturgical to the arrival and to the departure. It is not that I love anniversaries! To count, to measure, to listen to one's self dying! But I love Brutul.

There is something of the old me in the air which clings to the trees. I breathe it as I pass. I know all the pines, chesnuts, ashes and lindens of Brutul. I have seen them under every sky, I know every change in their physiognomy. They are relations with whom one has shared good days and bad.

Now that I know how precious it is, I look, I look as if it were always for the last time in my life. Reading in the open air seems as ill-bred to me as reading in church to the contemplative.

To read, into the bargain, in a world where one must sleep! This need for sleep causes so many hours in the life of things to remain unknown to us! When I have not beheld one day enough, I know that I have lost something irreparable which will never come back.

*Brest, Sunday, July 30*

So I have returned. I do not love being at home again. Prison memories become dear the day of release only, and there are so many bad days within these walls. . . . Along the delicious road from Lorient to Brest, I said to myself that home-coming[1] needs a family, or at least a familiar setting, and I felt my heart sink. They who know nothing of solitude are naïve when they talk about it! I begin to love Mme. du Deffand for having confessed that she wouldn't stand it five minutes. Amiel, who had a taste for it, declares it to be a makeshift.

[1] "Retour *at home*." English in the text. Tr.

Man is born to attract everything to himself, to inspire and to experience sympathies. Solitude is of a lower order. A soldier does not prefer sentry-duty to field-service. It is more intelligent to love a man better than a tree.

"Men, who are the sole end of my actions, and the object of my whole life. My pleasures, my sorrows, my passions, my affairs, everything revolves about them. If I existed alone on earth, its entire possession would be little for me. I should have no further cares, pleasures or desires. Fortune and fame would be but names for me: *For, let us make no mistake, men are all we enjoy, the rest is nothing.*"

At the station, found Marc [1] superb in his blond distinction, with the air of a slender Grand Duke; at the house, Madame Lemonnier: The most amiable of women after the smartest boy in town. Come, it went less badly than I feared.

I pass from the superstition of regularity to that of caprice. No matter, all told, since I am always working, and since idleness with me is only a rare and precious symptom of health.

Mornings I must fling myself on something to read. This is the indispensible mental injection. Once I have taken the dose, I am ready. But, when I return, after having been kept a long time, almost before I have torn off my hat and my gloves, I should, physically, be unable to unclench

[1] Naval officer and friend of the family.

my teeth before half an hour's or an hour's reading without lifting my eyes; and, sometimes, it is into very dull things that I plunge in this fashion. Besides, this impulse is very much like a flight.

I should do Providence this justice, that I am, on the whole, spared insomnia; for waking up in the night is something which exceeds the limits. When I am asleep, I am nearer health. When I am awake, I hear my condemnation pronounced anew with stupor. But I prefer a thousand times all the nostalgia in the world, and to have heard. That will remain the best thing I have had. So much the better if it be a childhood memory. Music is half of human consciousness.

And yet I *will*, I will always. This word is my one way of hoping. "I will." I caress myself with it. It is a word as gentle as the worst obstinacies as secret as smouldering impulses. . . .

" 'I will' is the rarest word, although the most frequently usurped; and, one day or other, expect to see the possessor of its terrible secret, whoever he may be, above your heads. Thus was Caesar."

(Lacordaire.)

*Le Trez-Hir,*[1] *Friday 11*

Yesterday evening, the bay iridescent, the sea heavy with calm, as thick and opaque as an opal. I did not know it could be so varied. I am no longer so sure that I prefer the mountains.

[1] Beach near Brest.

*Tuesday, August 22*

Read Maupassant's *Sur l'eau*, Chevrillon's *Thèbes*. I love nothing so much as things, and it is extraordinary the power a book has over me.

I read in a hollow on what was left of the beach, for it is the season of high-tides and the sea keeps on rising. In my deep little bight, between the hollow walls of the dune, I no longer saw anything but the green and blue water, busy close by, living, horribly in haste. I felt the shock of its heavy heaving. There was a flight of steps behind me.

All this strong, silent agitation is still more mysterious and absurd when deprived of the human illusion of noise. Water has such an air of working! As the hour of high-tide approaches, one would say it was hurrying to arrive on time.

Every evening the reflection of the moon's gold on the sea, still very blue, is something wide, intense, regnant.

*Sunday, 27*

Reminiscences of music, enough to make my head turn. That Hungarian rhapsody by Lizst, the opening bars of which I cannot recall! There are evenings when I can no longer go to sleep. In the deepest calm comes a start which awakens me, as if my room were flooded with light. I do not know how it is I do not find myself with my two feet on the ground, or like Mme. B . . . de B . . ., when the thunder crashes, kneeling on my pillow.

I should, at least, have the full use of my eyes. I haven't enough horizon for breathing. I see better than many who are near-sighted, but I need a mortal shade. On the beach I am seized by a frantic desire to snatch off my glasses and my hat, to shut my parasol! I cannot tell whether I see things, or whether I merely remember them.

And it is to me that this horror has come, to me who understand life only in an atmosphere of vibrant light. . . .

My formula for happiness is the following: Italy, music, horses and love. I have some hestitation with regard to this last and, if I introduce it into my programme, it is because of the axiom: when in doubt, don't do without.[1] But certainly I hold it in the fourth place. It seems to me that, of the two sorts of love, legitimate and illegitimate, "the good people bore me and the others displease me." And that is why I consider that marriage for money involves a higher aesthetic principle than marriage for love.

I recognize, however, that, in this great need —the only one which I feel—to lead a very superior sort of life, there is clearly the very conscious and fully confessed will to win from hearts this high prestige of admiration.

The only need I feel!

"I am disinterested," said Fiévée, "like all those who want to grasp everything at once."

[1] Dans le doute ne pas s'abstenir. Tr.

Being unable to love what I do not admire in any respect, I regard as friendships those only which seek, in me, that alone which I esteem, or would esteem, in others. There is neither friendship nor love without reciprocal admiration. That is why friendship between women is so rare. What would you have them respect in their lives?

I have such an adoration for intelligence, because I have discovered, in spite of the general prejudice, all that it adds to attachments.

It alone gives beings the curiosity and the strength to penetrate each other. The element of passion being equal, do you believe that the love of two superior persons is the same sentiment as the love of common mortals?

Great sentiments spring from the brain.

"Eighteen years of boredom and solitude made her read many books."

(Self-epitaph of the Great Catherine.)

"Man has done nothing great save as he has succeeded in revolting against necessity, struggling against blind and imbecile chance." (Nietzsche.)

*Le Trez-Hir, 1899*

I have had an instinctive distrust of manual labor. What lethargy it keeps women in!

If they had not ready at hand that miserable occupation—not more absorbing than beating the time of a march with the foot and, above all, not

more useful—they would be obliged to take the initiative in something else.

If a woman needs occupations of a reassuring humility, cooking at least has its charm and the clever care of a house, to which not one in a hundred attains. But even these two things require too great a use of intelligence. After that, if women can neither talk nor read, nor play, let them go among the poor, *parbleu!* and to Church. But charity and piety, beyond a certain point, are also more out of their reach than is commonly believed.

How badly they treat "our current literature"! Yet where find more intelligent, more cultivated, more original talents? I love my contemporaries, even in their imperfections.

Frightful day. I declare, then, that I am in a bad humor and jokingly carry all my exaggerations too far for them to be taken seriously, which permits me to lament incognito. That is considered very funny: "You ought decidedly to be in bad humor every day." O Molière, how funny you must have been when you passed in your proper person, among the pointed hats and all the formal trappings!

The attitude which I take towards my reading, which astonishes them: the authors who see coarsely, who see comically or are simply squeamish. God! the moral authors have shocked me more, have seemed to me less "clean" than the

others who adore life as a whole and do not appear to suspect that a fly may fall into their glass.

The romantic faults do not find indulgence with me, but to speak of them with disgust seems to me as dull-witted as the abject laughter provoked by deceived husbands.

Since all is a matter of opinion, as the Stoics declared, it is unclean seeing that sullies things.

*Friday, September 1st*

It rains and nothing holds my attention. I pass from one book to another and stick to nothing. I need something other than distraction in what I do: to feel where it is leading me. I always have the sensation of a person who is late and who, pressed for time, in order to enjoy a little moral quietude, has no other resource than to go straight to his rendez-vous.

It is not a cure I would ask, but a truce while there is still time, so that I could make something of it. I would become a prisoner on parole and, at 35 I would return to the fortress.

Ah! I begin to become very humble. I entertain ideas on the subject of happiness such as a dying man might have after a long illness. He sees his life "in that irremediable distance of things viewed in the past." Whatever is not real happiness—the intimate happiness of daily life—is insignificant; and happiness is love.

Whatever one's pride, there is no escape from

that. What good is it to parade your pride, if no one loves you the more for it?

Seduction, being seduced, will remain for me the definition of life. It is because I wanted the most perfect seduction, and because I felt it therein, that I believed first in Holiness!

Like Marguerite d'Angoulême, "I bear more than my burden of the boredom common to every well-born being."

If I could get over being bored, I should never suffer; but it is no exaggeration to say that *my boredom never ceases.*

I am bored to the point of madness, I am bored desperately! And it is that which fill me with fever, which renders me so stupidly laborious. For boredom is a disquietude and has nothing to do with apathy.

I can no longer even imagine what would distract me.

I can no longer imagine other than a sad happiness. The great beguilement of travelling is the one thing that tempts me. Let me always be led about like an invalid. "The great mute lands will stretch away before me." And, always within reach, a boat to bear me away to the open sea, to inoculate me with all the blue of sea and sky.

It is instructive to write regularly what one thinks; for today I should no longer wish for love. What should I say to a man, what should I do with a stranger? But I declare that I have never

wished for death, since it is of death that I suffer. Aside from certain physical pains, I believe that there are no unbearable sufferings, or, at least, that there are none which do not exaggerate their importance when they appeal to annihilation. Nothing is worth the trouble of dying.

Our taste for annihilation bears too close a resemblance to a virtue of necessity. I dare confess that I had rather live forever, no matter how.

"We must animate and love the silent substance of life." I have had this love from my birth, and my experiences, harsh as they have been, have served only to render it more conscious. I despise those who, with regard to this esoteric optimism, are not in the secret. It is very naïve to want to base optimism upon something, but very pitiful not to be able to base it upon nothing.

"Es ist wahr, wir lieben das Leben, nicht weil wir leben, sondern weil wir sind Leben gewohnt."

*Friday 8*

Yesterday the bay was green with all the greens. The green sea is more translucid than the blue. It is of a finer water.

*Saturday, September 9*

Weak beings are patient. Endurance is their strength, just as obstinacy is their will-power. Doctors have observed superior endurance in woman as compared with man, who has a fuller

intelligence of the harm done and is better fitted for the strenuous life. There is one courage stronger than another—that of protest. Suffering is a degradation. We make an absurd merit of our "having suffered," since necessity assumes exclusive responsibility for accomplishing this. We should not suffer, never suffer, but react. Now reaction is not patience, still less resignation.

*Monday, September 11*

The other day, with M. du B . . . the talk turned on the superiority of Admiral Fournier. He or another—the moment anyone is admired, I feel, as it were, a madness of emulation, an impatience at being nothing, when there are those who are something. It is not that I have any illusions as to the value represented by notoriety, but I am not misled with regard to "hidden merits" either. I regret it for the sake of the self-conceit and the security of the obscure, like myself; but the projection of one's name beyond one's self is a difficult thing, hence a form of excellence.

What a terrible thing to be bored! Rather than stand it all my life, I feel capable of becoming famous!

I drag a portrait of the Empress of Austria with me everywhere. This traveller and recluse, this involuntary intellectual, assumes the proportion of a patron saint.

*Sunday, September 17*

Yes, I devote a patience and a Chinese ingenuity to the art of hoping, and I have none of the sanctimonious pessimism which spits upon the grapes when they are too green. Yes, I love life just as it is. What does it matter to me that things are "vain" and "passing"? In that case it is the ephemeral character and the vanity which are adorable. . . . *If* love is a happiness, *if* the unknown, the mystery and the habit and the novelty are forms of happiness; if wit, goodness, laughter, badness, movement, dress, change, noise are also forms; then all these must be loved, because there is nothing else. And it is men's finest miracle that, confronted with the fifth-rate melodrama of their existence, they have been able to invent astonishing, necessary, prodigious frivolity.

"Keep, O vain men, the things which are vain!"

(Imitation.)

Music obsesses me—living, energetic, rushing music: the allegro of the great septuor, the ouverture of Ruy Blas, a Chopin waltz, also the *Marche aux Flambeaux*. . . . But what are we then to music, and what is it to us?

I recall the ballad from *Henri VIII*, with its adorable accompaniment of arpeggios. We had just returned from a distant visit to a very old and beautiful house on the *quais*. We were in an open carriage and drove very rapidly because of a

threatening storm which weighed and vibrated upon old Paris, upon the wide, tortuous Seine and, farther along, upon the triangular pediments of the Louvre. I hummed the ballad, happy to be in Paris, excited by the storm and feeling also, I think, the beauty of the violet clouds on the violet stones.

Twelve years ago. . . . If we knew how we were destined to remember things.

Now and then comes a start, an end of my patience at being unable not to be deaf for one hour longer. And, on the morrow, to wake up with the thought that there is no other waking possible!

*Friday, September 22*

I am no longer good for anything but the *tête-à-tête*. My friends become strangers for me the moment they are gathered together.

To see groups form about my armchair, to see them grow animated while I remain motionless with my youth and my wit; to become a sort of stone pillar in the midst of so much mirth embarrassed by my serious air amid the laughter; to be there in a pink dress, representing one who is absent and indicating an empty place!

*They do not know what I lose.* Another in my place would not lose so much.

And all that, in the long run, installs itself in the past. I no longer find there anything but that. Front or rear, I am hemmed in.

I am driven towards solitude. I am kept there

against my will: thou shalt not stir thence! "And for ever shalt thou dwell in the spirit of this spell." [1]

I live a year each day.

How many things I see pass in my hours, slow or restless with boredom! God, life, death and love—how I shall have pondered upon them!

Most brains have never seen these things pass as often in a whole lifetime, as I encounter them in a single day.

Again I am wrong to speak of love. I named it, carried away by the series, because I exclude nothing from my curiosity, and because I believe it necessary, in order to have had all the interesting experiences which this world affords.

It is a thing to be added to life, but it would not suffice me at all.

*Saturday, September 23*

It is cold, clear and sonorous, for sonority is seen and is breathed also. I adore this season in which the light falls more intimately. There is now no noon, but a morning which lasts until evening. Autumn by the sea is not red, it is white. The light entering the windows is the same as that which crosses snow—a cold, brilliant light, which seems to arrive fresh-sharpened from the poles.

Walking on the beach at eight o'clock, all is exquisite, blue, radiant, the shores with fine,

[1] Quoted in English. Tr.

sharply edged ridges and clouds everywhere on the horizon—those clouds, strung like pearls, which are eternally fair-weather clouds at sea. The *menus* of the Bellone.[1] I love this morning walk on the enormous, deserted beach, on the sand as hard and brown as a rubber carpet, breathing, with every breath, all the perfumes of my toilette, with the majestic arrival of the great waves rolled like organ pipes, intact on a front of twenty meters, the glittering plunge, then, snowy, the superb salutation of the surf.

I am reading *Les Tenailles*, by Hervieu. It is the saddest book I know. A single thing seems lugubrious to me: the sly happiness of the weak. Let us, then, not be deceived! We must will our happiness to the full. What concerns us is that it should not be a base happiness. My morality is a good deal like that of the Persians: not to lie, and to send one's arrow straight to the mark; or even to lie if we like, provided it is not a lie which asks for mercy; for a part, at least, of our sincerity owes nothing to anyone.

The other morning, at ebb-tide, I went down over the wet sand, polished like a mirror, and then the mirror became so perfect, the sky sank so far into it, that, seized with dizziness, walking in the void, I could not continue.

[1] When her grandfather, Admiral Dauriac, commanded on the coast of Africa, one of his midshipmen frequently ornamented his menus with remarkable designs, the collection of which is preciously preserved.

*Monday, September 25*

I love mirrors, I love to surround myself with them. In the first place they multiply the light; but I love them because I find myself in them. To hear one's self neither speak, nor stir, nor breathe, with debauches of soliloquizing which bring us to this precious conclusion, that the "I" is the most intangible of fugitive things and is evidently but an habitual illusion, analogous to optical aberration . . . all this joined to inveterate boredom—the boredom which reduces things to their minimum of existence and, in this slackening of vital movement, makes us feel so clearly *that there is nothing in the better perceptible interval* of the succession of phenomena—nothing which remains and is "I."

Then, when we have reached this point, our visage, which "sagt nicht Ich, aber thut Ich," represents for us the one thing to which we can pin our name. I am in front of my triple-mirror, much like Socrates seeking to know himself. I say: "Marie," and I study my physiognomy as if it were a stranger's. Believe as we will, our appearance teaches us pretty nearly all we know of ourselves. Many characters and habits would be different if we had seen another look and another nose in the glass.

My stopped-up ears are like having my head swathed in a bandage—a bandage which a nervous, mechanical impulse is always urging me to tear off; and someone always holds my hands and I fall asleep, and I awake in a fever of cotton-wadding.

*Friday, September 19*

Found still another article on Marie Bashkirtseff. Is it not curious that no one has ever been interesting without being immediately punished for it?

But I, until I was twenty-two, dreamt only of asceticism. This is to be noted: if I had not believed in my calling for it, I should not have studied religion, and, without religious studies, I never should have studied anything at all. . .

*Brest, Sunday, October 22*

The slow, continuous progress of my eyes resuscitates me. I recover sensations I have not known for ten years. I feel myself more enveloped by life, I get back a more breathable atmosphere. But, as I come nearer to normal life, I measure all the distance which separated me from it. The time I have lost overwhelms me.

"They see nothing which makes enough of a mark to measure the time they have lived . . . and nevertheless, like those who awake, they feel they have slept long."

What patience and what resignation shall I be able to summon when I am old, with such memories? And I want, I absolutely want to remember, hour by hour; and that is why I am so implacable now. I keep my accounts with destiny; for, should the hour of vengeance arrive, I want to measure it, point by point, with what it has to avenge.

*Tuesday, November 1st*

Alone in the house for all day. What shall I have done by evening? My heart beats with pent-up toil. I go to my study as to a rendez-vous. Only, before such a coercion, before a so evident: "Write or die," one is obliged, through self-pity, to produce nothing but master-pieces.

I have the misfortune to be cheerful, and people conclude therefore that all is well. I have tamed my life and the others are brave. There are days when I never want to laugh again, when I want to lose my pretty, easy air and assume a lamentable one when I should like to inspire fear. It must be a consolation to be able to wear mourning for one's self.

*November 13*

I have the repetition mania. Aside from any impression of sadness and boredom, the daily return of the identical phrases puts me to sleep like the repetition of hypnotic passes.

*Friday, November 17*

What is to become of me? I have not a shadow of resignation, and it is impossible to imagine a higher degree of impatience. Where is the law of compensation in which we are so happy to believe, in order to avoid excessive complaint or envy?

*Sunday 19*

I have had to give up my voice; still another link broken. Not to hear it and not to know how it

sounds to others, is disquieting. This voice which I scatter carelessly and which expresses me, but without my being able to know just how far it betrays. . . .

My eyes never leave those with whom I talk. To lower my eyes! to talk, to listen without looking—what a relief!

*November 20*

Shall I ever find definitive what I have written? The idea that it is that and not something else, the idea that it is I, that I shall be judged by it. In the millions of shadings which may alter my thought, in the millions of forms which may metamorphose it, is this the right one, and, above all, the most completely *I?* If my frightful mania of relativity, my extraordinary perception of *other possibilities* pursues me in style also, as it does in life, I am embarked on a boundless toil. I die already of laziness at the thought of it. . . . But I am more intelligent, more determined, better endowed than three-fourths of our writers. I possess all that which is not acquired, and a little of that which is acquired, if only erudition. . . . But I need money, I need a *milieu*, and the present hour is good but to be sacrificed.

*Saturday 25*

Moments when impatience, the impossibility of *realizing* what has happened, so normal an impulse towards normal life, reminiscences of familiar

sensations so perfect that they seem to have been wrested from us the day before, when everything grows in a way which is literally unbearable.

It takes me two hours to go to sleep. I keep sitting up thinking of strange things; but, all of a sudden, a musical phrase, and then, it is finished. There I am as wide awake as in broad daylight—as if my room were flooded with it.

*Sunday 27*

When I have finished, I begin again, and this is perhaps the tenth time I have read Vauvenargues and La Rochefoucauld. Now that I know them well, I have an equal esteem for both; and Vauvenargues, whom I had been taught to regard as a weak imitator, is the one in whom I discover the most unexpected things—shades of meaning so modern that I always think of Nietzsche who, moreover, had a high regard for him.

Is he not responsible for M. Renan: "Is it because we are wanting in penetration that we reconcile so few things?"

"Men do not understand each other. There are fewer fools than is generally believed." Criminals, for example.

And what dilletantism, of which he was not suspected: "If high thoughts deceive you, they amuse you."

On individualism: "We believe in our right to make a man happy at his own expense, yet we are unwilling for him to have it himself."

Moreover, Vauvenargues, very individualistic, has demolished advice and experience: "Very few big things are done through advice."

The word "heart" has created an illusion concerning him. He is not a sentimentalist, but a pragmatist; for the difference between him and La Rochefoucauld is that he does not observe after life, but before it, from a more utilitarian standpoint. Very much more subjective, he is visibly in search of pretexts for his activity.

What a magnificent treatise on the art of "arriving" could be written with his "reflections and maxims"! I am not at all astonished that the author of "The Will to Power" loved Vauvenargues.

Ambitious! He measures men only in their relation to glory. "We despise many things to keep from despising ourselves."

"All men deem themselves worthy of the highest places; but nature, which has not rendered them capable of filling these, so arranges it that they remain quite content in the lowest." "We despise great projects when we feel ourselves incapable of great successes." "Men have great pretentions and tiny projects."

And what adorable scepticism: "Men ordinarily pay tribute to the merit of others only at the last extremity." "We are too attentive to ourselves, or too much occupied with our own affairs, to go into one another deeply. Anyone who has seen maskers dancing sociably together at a ball, and

holding each other's hands without being acquainted, then separate the minute after, never to meet again, and without a regret, can form an idea of the world."

O Luc de Clapiers,[1] I love you as if I had lost you.

*Wednesday, December 6*

All day at Vizac yesterday. From noon, in the dead leaves, under the grayest of skies, lighted only by the dead leaves.

The little roads are covered with litters of these leaves. We ran from the wood-choppers to the broom-corn-gatherers, always following the wide avenues where it is now light—a light like that which falls through the roof of a ruined abbey.

*Thursday*

To feel that one cannot put one's self entirely into what one does! I should like to work with my whole soul, to be sure of yielding the maximum. Even if it were ordinary, if it could be but a provisional maximum, I should confess it freely. It would be such a result to be able to say: At least it is all I am capable of; I have availed myself of all my present resources.

How much comatose matter there is in us!

Poor miserable brain which serves us as soul.

I need intellectual effort and application as others need air and exercise.

[1] Marquis de Vauvenargues. Tr.

For me writing is a veritable reading of myself, in which I often meet with much more that is unexpected than in a book, even when it is original.

But what I read did not exist before. I put it there when I discovered it.

Thus one must write to exist, to become one's self.

When I was a Jansenist and I reread my copybooks, I was troubled to recognize that, without the fine thoughts, all dressed up as literature, which I collected there, I should have no wish to renounce this world and enter a convent. "I have loved the beauty of your house and the place where your glory dwells." Who can say how many vocations have been determined by this admirable phrase, which at once wrings the heart?

*Monday 18*

We blame nature too easily for our physical defects. There is not an outward blemish which is not an inward blemish. We should expect nothing save from ourselves and, this being the case, we have no right to lack anything, whether wealth or health or beauty.

We have no ground to find consolation for our defects in our intelligence. *Intelligence should be a physical beauty.* It is second-rate if it does not attain that point. Its role is to eclipse everything.

*Tuesday, December 22*

Yesterday, dinner at home. R . . . said to me

in the course of it: "There are days when I weep with anger for you." Anger does not need tears.

*December 24*

There are moments when, immobilized in bed, or at a social gathering, having nothing better to do, I pray. But that is detestable to me. In the first place, I hope for nothing and then asking exasperates the desire. I am at once seized with such a transport. To ask for faith (which I never separate from vocation), or for health and happiness, is to imagine them so intensely that a stimulation of regret always ensues. We should be Stoics, even in Christianity, and never put all our heart into the goods which do not depend upon ourselves, not excepting divine mercy.

*Tuesday 26*

Yesterday, while I was there, R . . . wrote something and put it into my pocket with the injunction not to read it until I reached home. I found this among other things: I should like to be you, if only to have my admiration.

## 1900

*January 1, 1900*

Passed all day yesterday with Leconte de Lisle. A novel tires me much more quickly than "hard reading." Really beautiful things have not that

loose weave, those holes through which we watch our boredom. For what tires us in reading is not attention, but inoccupation.

*January 8*

The progress of my eyes reconstitutes my life. Just as our intellectual memory depends upon the quality of our attention and our means of assimilation, so our general memory—that is to say the impression left by life, our consciousness of having already lived—is mathematically related to the play and power of our physical organs. I was isolated in the present moment, not connecting myself in the evening with what I was in the morning, and night interposed a death between one day and the next. Little by little my sensation of the present widens, combines better with the eve and the morrow. I am encompassed by time, and my memory is improved. And in space, as in time, the point where I live appears to me less broken up. I divine more clearly the street beneath my window, the city about me.

How could I question the manner in which life is made? With my organs, I lost my soul. I recover it with them.

*January 16*

Mary Darmesteter's study on the Bronté sisters. "The only thing in the world where I live is the world which I bear within me," and in her remarks on Charlotte: "The Eternal sheds upon us a deep

sleep, wherein he ravishes our heart of flesh to replace it with a star—that is to say a new world, charming and unknown."

That woman is deliciously intelligent.

*Jane Eyre* is considered superior to *Shirley*. I prefer *Shirley*, which I find better constructed and of an almost inexplicable charm. But there, *Jane Eyre* raises questions, and it is strongly dosed with romanticism—even with melodrama—for a French taste. Too much love in literature.

Life is richer than that, which is why I prefer poets to novelists.

*January 17*

My life does not occupy me enough, with the result that my thought does not function automatically. I have to direct it like a meditation.

Evenings, while awaiting sleep, or during my long toilette, that rings too hollow. I get out of it by making a programme, point by point, step by step; but by dint of going over this programme, I have enough to it. My highest summit, as Zarathustra would say, no longer attracts me. I seem to have lost taste for it. So that I am on the point of being unable to seek refuge in the future, for fear of spoiling it. What has already happened, moreover; and, no matter how I lived, it would be hard for me not to have the sensation of an irksome beginning over again.

Well, anyway, I have the resource of recalling all the music and poetry I know by heart. The latter

is extremely limited. An opera, a symphony, from one end to the other, despairing at the bars which do not come back to me.

When I chance to have thought *without doing it on purpose,* really absorbed by something—a memory from my reading, generally—I awake from it with a happy surprise, like a night on the railroad: I've been asleep!

O you, who boast your acquaintance with it, know that this is boredom!

*January 20*

I said to Mama that I did not wish for glory in order to be well known, but so that certain persons, whom I know may think of me what I think of them.

*January 26*

I read what Montalembert wrote of Lacordaire! I returned to Notre Dame to kneel before that pulpit: "I am mistaken, gentlemen, there is a man whose love guards the tomb. There is a man whose sepulchre is not only glorious, as a prophet has said, but whose sepulchre is beloved. . . . There is a man pursued in his suffering and in his tomb by an inextinguishable hatred and who, demanding apostles and martyrs of all posterity, finds apostles and martyrs in the bosom of every generation. There is one man, in short, and one only, who has founded his love upon the earth, and this man is You, O Jesus! You who have consented to baptize

me, to anoint me, to consecrate me in Your love, and whose name alone, at this moment, opens my heart, and wrests from it this accent which arouses me myself, and which I did not know I possessed!"

Nothing is superior to eloquence, not even beauty; for beauty is superior and desirable only because of its eloquence, its moral ascendancy. Influencing men is the whole of grandeur, the whole of human beauty. It is even, uniquely and by definition, the whole of life.

To enjoy the present as if it were definitive, and to work to escape from it, to transcend it, as if it were intolerable.

*January 30*

D'Annunzio says that the hand reveals the body. In any case, it reveals the soul. I am absolutely superstitious with regard to the hand—not in its lines, like the palmists, but in its shape. I have never met a sympathetic being with hideous hands. The hand, which is nothing but gestures, should be more plastic than the face, since we are more responsible for it. I am not speaking of its beauty, which is an accident of animal nature, but of its physiognomy. Your hand may be as large, as shapeless as you like, but thick, red, rough—never. The hand must have a soul. I affirm that there is no exception to the revelatory significance of the hand. For example, I have an horror of the "fine hand," fat, soft and pudgy, with fingers like sausages—"tapering," they call it—too much flesh for me.

Useless to add that I have Arab hands, slender and straight, with extraordinarily delicate joints, and the minimum of flesh.

*Tuesday, February 6*

When I read scientific and philosophical works, I experience a literary delight. The technical precision of the language enchants me. I adore words. I am convinced, like Richepin, that our souls are composed of them. Another word, a new combination of prefixes, gives my brain a sensation of physical well-being. It seems to me that form has been bestowed upon a little shapeless cell: *inconditionné, idéation, introspection, quantitatif.* . . . Well! all such words please me and above all, ah! above all, *agrégat cohérent.* An organism is an *agrégat cohérent.* I am an *agrégat incohérent.* The Pope is an *agrégat cohérent.*

I am in an abyss of solitude. I want to see no one, not even those who would be agreeable. Without the voice everything tires and bores. And then if, by rare chance, I happen to meet someone really intelligent, our cultures and preoccupations are too different. What I need is the *milieu* of a capital. If I had only one or two millions, I could receive at Paris or at Rome, choose my friends, surround myself as I liked. And I am expected not to want money more than anything else! Yes, more than anything else, *more than health even.* I was not born mercenary, but I have reflected. I shall be too

frightfully bored through want of millions not to know the immense part of life represented by them.

Money means the conquest of the earth by travel, of art by museums, and of men by receptions and charity. Money is the electric current between life and us. Without money, there is no contact.

Lacking that, there is talent—it is a matter of life *sine qua non*—but a superlative talent. As Marie Bashkirtseff says: "It would take more than an honorable talent to make up to me for all my annoyances. It would take a revelation, a triumph whose name would be Revenge."

*Et moi, j'ai tellement plus à venger!*
*Il suffit à mes destinées*
*Des deux leçons si rudement données.*
*J'ai compris comme tu voulus,*
*D'autres enseignements y seraient superflus.*
*A tes iles d'or, noir de cyprès couronnées,*
*Puissent mes séjours être révolus,*
*Douleur je ne veux pas être un de tes élus. . . .*[1]

*Wednesday, February 14*

At dinner R . . . said to me: "I have spent the day asking myself if I would like to be you." But I do not know "I," I cannot be "I."

[1] And I—I have so much more to avenge! Two lessons, so harshly given, suffice for my destiny. I have understood as thou wished, other teachings would be superfluous. May my sojourn in thy golden islands, crowned with dark cypresses, draw to its close, O Sorrow, I would not be one of thy elect.

There is no suffering more *inhuman* than deafness. A blind man can live through others only. Matter disappears, contact is established from soul to soul, there is a drawing together. But as soon as speech disappears, beings become things. Distant, detached, difficult of access, they can do nothing for our happiness.

*Saturday, March 3*

I no longer have any impression of my age. I have been so transported to the confines of life, that I seem contemporary with women on the decline. The young have no interest for me. I love only those who have regrets, but real regrets. Trifling misfortunes, little disappointments—heart-troubles, for example, make me cruel. I love those who have been really deceived, robbed—those who have a very ugly and heartfelt grimace to make at existence.

To have read all books, smelt all flowers, caressed all animals, lived in all climates, known all races, tasted all joys and all melancholies, known all admirations and all lucidities and, dying, to have at last to cast aside only a rind squeezed and twisted by a master-hand. Amen!

*March 13*

These copy-books: the collection of my mental headaches. Not that I repudiate them; I am only what they say; but I have the patience to dwell

on my present life only in my bad moments. At other times I work and forge ahead.

Shall I have the patience to reread them? What a question, never! . . . if I did not ask myself, at the same time, what effect reading them would produce on others. I shall do nothing to have them published, but I want them to be publishable. I confess cynically, that I need other people because, at bottom, they are all there are, and because there is only one consolation—not their pity, but their love, their admiration, their emotion, their jealousy—the strongest response that can be wrested from them.

"Men, who are the sole end of my actions, and the object of my whole life. My pleasures, my sorrows, my passions, my affairs—everything revolves about them. If I existed alone on earth, its entire possession would be little for me: I should have no further cares, pleasures, or desires. Fortune and fame would be but names for me: *For, let us make no mistake, men are all we enjoy, the rest is nothing.*" (Vauvenargues. Discours préliminaire à l'étude de l'esprit humain.)

It is a prejudice to believe that prejudices can be shared only through prejudice.

*Friday, March 23*

*Sapristi!* Read the *Kreuzer Sonata* at one sitting. I prefer immoral books; they are less shocking. As for the problem, it demonstrates

once again that, outside of intellectual value, there is no salvation. The Trappist morality of the Sonata is indispensable to those *who think only through their consciences.*

Make intellectuals of them, and the lamentable Posnicheffs find a way out. Love alone is insufficient for loving, and intelligence is the one thing which keeps us from ever being bored in each other's company. At bottom ordinary people must even be incapable of loving each other, since they cannot embellish their common existence. By what right should they exercise a power of seduction even over their fellows? We should be able to live alone like the stars, to be, like them, independent worlds, sure of our orbits, if we are to possess the attraction which troubles the heart, wins it over, and retains it. But Tolstoy is the least intellectual of novelists. His brain is merely a conscience. We may be sure he has never loved, except after the fashion of a Posnicheff.

*Saturday, March 31*

My present nervousness, my preoccupation, my sadness when I forget myself in a slow undertaking —literary translation of Spencer—all this is a proof that I must throw off the old yoke. My Benedictine life is finished. I loved it as a road and, had I the goal, I should love it as an excursion; but I don't it for an orbit!

Henceforth I want to live only to write and to

redeem myself. To have talent and to read lips. *I si no no.*

*April 1*

God! how I love the Prince de Ligne. He is Athos, with the 18th century to boot. These Princes de Ligne, father and son, are even Athos and Bragelonne. But confess, then, that men of wit are the only ones who know how to love! They alone are capable of appreciating all the charm of a being. Look at those three intellectuals, *la Trinità Stessa*, said a cardinal: François 1°, Louise de Savoie, Marguerite d'Angoulême. It is useless for us to pretend to be ingenuous, intelligence is the one thing we love. It is moral and physical splendour; for it is not itself if it does not communicate at least beauty of movement, of look and of voice—the beauty which is eloquent by definition.

Socialism, like paradise. Much more perfect, but we regret the earth.

*April 2*

I have read an article by Mirbeau: *"Propos galants sur les femmes."* They are rather coarse-minded, rather masculine witticisms at the expense of feminism.

How is it that it does not occur to them that *from the maternal point of view even*, a woman should have in existence a life, habits and aptitudes "beyond" her children? Distinguished children will not easily have an enthusiastic adoration for

the good mother for whose existence they serve as a pretext, who live by their flannel vests and their medicines, by their problems and their small-talk, by their 10's and their prizes, by their examinations and their matrimonial projects.

Read, on the contrary, Auguste de Staël's letters after his mother's death, saying how far their family life had fallen—no longer a conversation, no longer an interest.

And how is it that men do not feel that love should grow with the woman? It would seem that they make the intelligent woman pay for the silly creatures they have been compelled to love.

But the remark I wanted to make is this: the majority of these men of letters who reason on feminism, are not men of that world where man and woman meet each other on an equal footing.

The first women of letters were *grandes dames*, and this fact in no wise embarrassed their associates in the salons, who encouraged them.

When Catherine II wanted to command her fleet, she enquired if this would not appear ridiculous. Her advisers answered that that would depend upon how she did it.

I feel something plebeian in masculine opposition to feminism—a habit of seeing the servant, the housekeeper in the woman. A *gentleman* [1] who has always seen his mother shining in the company of distinguished men, the son of a peeress in her own

[1] In English. Tr.

right, a minister like Lord Melbourne who would rather have "had to do with ten kings than with one queen," so excessively conscientious did the royal scruple appear to him in the person of Victoria—such men see less humour in feminism.

*Friday, April 6*

Where is the soul visible? Not even in the eyes. The look, the expression of the eyes *does not come from the eye.* The puzzle presented by a newspaper is very difficult: to recognize the eye of someone whose head is wellknown, and yet the eyelids and the eyebrow are given. It is enough to put a little red and white on the cheeks, a little black on the eyebrows, in order to change the eyes entirely.

*April 12, Holy Saturday*

I am tired of pretending to have something to do! I get up through convention, through imitation, for I awake to nothing.

How can it come thus, without warning? . . . It is as brutal as a firing-squad. . . . Death without phrases, living death! . . . We shall never again have anything of our heart's desire, were we to live a hundred years!

The "Melancholy" which I imagine henceforth surpasses every conception. . . . Yes, the canvas will recall and fling into my face that mocking or painful grimace which we call laughter; and whoever sees it, man or woman, "will understand its

language," as the poet says, "and feel before it the community of despair," if he has had the least sorrow in his life.

Happiness is not worth the trouble it costs, the trouble of waiting. It is probable that life reserves more acceptable hours for me; but, however fine, however clean the cup in which we have taken a drug . . .

I live completely alone. It is an evil, but one which makes me more and more exacting as to the taste of its remedy. I go out alone, along the deserted streets, and I make for my terraces to shut myself tightly in between sky and sea. Seated under my umbrella, I behold the sky, the shore and the harbour, and then I walk a long time at a steady gait—one of the things which do me most good, the "spacing" of the Carthusians.

*Tuesday, April 18*

And already we are leaving again. I make no allusion to this departure. I have a horror of that which comes to an end, closes a period, makes us witness the gliding of the present into the past.

I have done nothing of what I wanted to do. . . . I shall, then, be able to act with decision and perseverance only in the projects and the studies which are of no use to me! . . . I read desperately things that are detestable. No, no, not like Amiel, to be good for nothing but to write my journal all my life!

Not to do something which can be judged superior by superior beings—that is what I should not forgive myself.

*April 19*

I am better, my eyes are better. However far they yet are from being good eyes, they give so many things back to me! It would have been nothing to be deaf only.

*Thursday 26*

Margot de M . . .'s marriage yesterday. Mlle. Chevert, the fashionable dressmaker, came to dress me, powder me—the first time in my life—etc. Mme. B . . . is stopped in the street: "You who love Mlle. Lenéru so much, should be happy . . . a friend befalls us. I could not resist the pleasure of coming to tell you." They all arrived like mad people: "Oh! Marie, Marie . . ." The truth is I rather like these landmarks, these opportunities to measure myself. Then I am not going to pieces too completely?

*April 27*

And yet—I am afraid God may hear me—I almost dare to say that I regret nothing. Without the cataclysm, either I should be a Carmelite, or else, amused by provincial successes, with my easy-going gaiety, I should have demanded nothing more, I should have "forgotten that the Ganges existed," I should not have this fever on rereading

Barrès's *Déracinés*, this emotion on taking up Marcus Aurelius for the twentieth time, this daily appeasement in making Leconte de Lisle my breviary. I should not have my preservative horror of woman. That being whose mentality and all the rest go no further than the fashion journal with, it is true, its accessories, its Doctor's talk, its needle-work and its society notes, its "broken-hearts" or its "blue sea"; for that is the whole nature of woman, and not only as she is, but as she dreams of being!

*May 1st*

Renan's letters to his sister, if they were not by him, would be exceedingly dull. Whatever he may say, it is not Saint Sulpice which taught him to write.

It is impossible to come upon letters which savour more of the seminary! When he speaks to Henriette of projects for the future and of social gatherings: "You were always an integral part of them . . . ." When we leave the 18th century and the Prince de Ligne! And how those unhappy beings must have bored each other mutually. Henriette has no Polish narrative. They repeat themselves to the point of satiety.

It is interesting to compare Renan's seminary impressions with Lacordaire's: "There is one of my enchantments which you do not know; it is beginning youth over again. I enjoy making myself loved, keeping, in a seminary, something of

worldly amenity." This is Lacordaire, of course. It is necessary to charm in order to be charmed.

*May 3*

Today I saw the *surface* of the water, the horizontality of the harbour. The château seems made of stone once more. It is as if my eyes had recovered their sense of touch.

It was so sure I remembered! In ten years I have forgotten everything. . . . Since I feel that I have been dead, I have not the sensation, on recovering life, of emerging from myself, but of returning.

"Quand je me résignais
déjà, la croyant morte,
C'est mon âme d'enfant
qui ressuscite en moi." [1]

*Brutul, May 4, 1900*

I was not a nervous woman, but I get acuter fits of aesthetic nerves than do other women. If a human movement about me lacks accuracy and absolute precision, it martyrizes me.

Being in a railroad carriage with a person who does not keep still, makes me want to jump through the door!

Women especially can neither stir nor stay still. This is a sign of squirming souls. Fine immobility

[1] When I was already resigned, believing it dead, it is my child soul which revives in me.

involves a decision equal to that demanded by active, precise movement.

*May 5*

I have read, with a start, Barrès' two articles on the Empress of Austria. I am struck by the eloquence of the quotations. The more I see of ascetics, the more I am persuaded that they achieve their development by means of that intelligence alone which, however, they affect to despise. Wherever the inward life manifests itself vigorously, you will always find *words*, which smack not only of intellectuality, but of choice, literary sense.

*Sunday 6*

If I possessed an imperturbable pride, I would enjoy perfect health. But I have the mania of relativity, I am quite capable of measuring myself and of situating myself like a number on a museum shelf, and not to be first takes from me the least desire to be second. A bad habit of ascetic perfection—the need to create my immortality on as high a level as possible.

In spite of my agreeing with Rabelais that "a man's value is determined by his own estimate of himself,"[1] "man is worthy according as he esteems himself," Baudelaire's clean-out brutality pleased me: "A man is another's equal when he proves it." And I have meditated Amiel's remark: "We believe we

[1] "Autant vaut l'homme comme il s'estime."

know ourselves, but so long as we do not know *our comparative value* and our *social rating*, our knowledge is inadequate: so long as we despise opinion, we lack a self-measure, are ignorant of our relative power."

*May 11*

I have little liking for Goncourt's "Chérie." All these men see a heap of nerves, of *indecency* in woman. I do not recognize a single one of my friends in her. On the other hand, I begin to lose my respect for the Goncourts, whom I have adored. They are women and what fondness for clothes! It is astonishing how little sufficed them in the course of their existence!

Travel, philosophy, music—these three primary human cultures are unknown to them. Perhaps living too exclusively by the eye, in a doctrinaire objectivity, binds you too closely to the immediate.

My present affinities are with d'Annunzio. "You know, my friend, I can talk well only of myself." To Barrès: "The most objective of men, he ceased to be interested in himself only in favour of those rare persons with whom he believed he was in occult relations."

*May 15*

The wind blows a gale. The trees look as if they were telling each other funny stories and couldn't keep their faces straight.

*May 16*

Oh! . . . Is it going to last a long time like this? Since my return from Trez-Hir in October, when I arrived fully decided to see myself grow everyday, more than seven months have now passed, and nothing is ready, nothing nearly completed!

*May 17*

How should I write a novel—I who have never dreamed one for myself? The heroine of a love-story will always be a stranger for me. I do not succeed in working, I have a scruple at emerging from myself. I divine that graver, more interesting, more absorbing things are occurring there.

*May 19*

To see! I measure my progress by my breathing, to see how much deeper it is. . . . And then I ask myself if there is really a year's existence in them; for it is with my whole life that I pay for my eyes.

*Thursday, May 24*

Going to mass for Ascension, along the narrow path skirting the parks, my reefer shining like a sealskin and a dazzling Robespierre cravat I felt light, lifting my dress, which came up without effort in the smooth sliding of the taffeta under-skirt, showing my high, tightly-laced boots.

Noticing the state of the roads, which was doubtful, I turned and flung at the ladies behind

me the expression, current in Franche-Comté, which I have just learned and which delights me: *Ah! nous allons tripper dans le gouillat.*[1] The ladies laughed, and I laughed too. Then a furious back-current: Oh! lord, to be able to be gay! to have done with the eternal pressure on my temples. O! the physical delight of a minute of real gaiety!

And I imagined things in their healthy normality. I should be walking along the road by the side of a man elegant and witty like me. Like me, he would love the vanities and verities of life. . . . Suddenly, the horrible bit of road; I let fly the marvellous expression, which he doesn't know. Double laughter; our tall figures swing along the road like a figure in a quadrille. He says: "How your laugh rings clear and true. Your laughter is persuasive"; and I answer: "It is because there is nothing better, more intelligent, more marvellous than laughter!"

*Monday, May 28*

We were talking of the sensations—entirely animal and instinctive—which are felt in the presence of works of art. I have wept but once at the theatre, when the curtain went up on *Le Médecin malgré lui!* It was my first encounter—on the stage—with Molière. It was all those Louis XIV costumes—the idea, I think, that all that was finished, lived out long ago, and owed its

[1] Ah! we are going to walk in the mud. Tr.

reappearance, its sole concrete immortality, to the skill of a writer of comedy. To my real surprise, the tears came. I immediately felt Molière's dignity. He began by overawing me.

It was in '93, I believe.

*29*

My moral anemia passes all bounds. Were I at home I would combat it with a cup of tea, but the *great resource* is more wholesome: one looks at one's watch and starts at a quick-step down the long alley. The first quarter of an hour, the temptation takes you to stop at every tree. At the end of half an hour, the soul-state begins to change. You breathe with open nostrils, the fatigue disappears, you become extraordinarily light and hope violently. You gain in firmness of purposes every minute. Your will stretches and shows all its teeth. Determination follows determination, each precise and intelligent, and, the hour up, you return supple, rested, with eyes that take in everything, and a charming benevolence for those for whom you have no need.

When it is impossible to find distraction in happiness, it is necessary to move. It is movement that most nearly resembles joy.

*May 30*

I have ordered all the Barrès'. He loves all those whom I love—the Empress of Austria and Marie Bashkirtseff; but his books are too youthful. They

have not the "sincerity of death." Barrès is worthy of knowing the real annoyances. He has not yet been bored. His contempt amuses him too much.

I know that my intensive abuse of solitude is not the best condition for successfully despising other people; but I need Barbarians.

It is always the same story: "In the world all the returns are to the convent. In the convent all the returns are to the world." I need other people. I should want to cut off none of the things which can diversify existence. I do not know which I love best, the vanities or the verities; but we must love beings at least as well as we love things. It cannot be denied that they add to our sensation of living, and Plato's pride is less dupe than that of Diogenes.

Finally, I cling to other people because *I am afraid*—afraid of the annihilation which is no more beyond death than eternity is beyond time.

*Friday, June 1st*

If it were possible to conquer each movement's content of carelessness, even when the movement is a determinate one, if it were possible to discharge each minute, even when filled with fever, of its thousandth part of idleness . . . the result would be eternity in depth.

I am pursued by this idea of *perfecting the instant,* of freeing each particle of existence from this law of gravity, which gives idleness "the upper hand over all our actions," our thoughts, our vibrations,

our undulations of all sorts, and makes us sleep away our lives from one end to the other!

Human negligence . . . it is that which will have astonished me more than anything else on earth. No one seems troubled at the thought of leaving, when he dies, so many possibilities which graze us in passing, fan us in their flight, and which might be ourselves, the best of ourselves, and which will never be.

There is in life that only which we put into each instant. We are too slow. We should learn to live with equal weight in an increasingly rapid movement, in order to see just how far that would go. . . . "I want to extend it in weight, I want to arrest the promptness of its flight by the promptness of my grasp and, by the vigorous employment of it, to make up for the haste of its flowing . . . the briefer the possession of life, the deeper and fuller I should render it."

Is this all I wish on the eve of my twenty-fifth birthday? No, and the things of the spirit suffice me no more than the others. They are not more important. We can take a little more pride in them. That is their sour superiority.

Resolutions:

I shall read less. I shall meditate here every day on myself. This will be my self-examination.

As soon as I arrive at Trez-Hir, I shall write 3 hours every morning, as a matter of hygiene, in order to ransack myself completely.

Have always, to bite into at need, a philosopher or some scientist or other, always some memoirs, and all the poets. Something in English, in German, in Latin and in Italian.

Set a great many dates.

Put off finishing things without commutation.

*Same day*

Three quarters of an hour of "spacing" in the garden, where it is as cold as in winter. Under the heavy clouds, without any reflection, everything is clear and cleancut in the even light. From a distance, the wide alley, with its line of shade, is like the margin of a forest.

I sleep on my arms before my twenty-fifth birthday, and do not want to read. Since yesterday I have a passion to put into two days what I have not put into my lost year.

Great Saint Catherine, behold me now one of your company. "In seeking your woman's part, you would have had only disappointments." Did I have a premonition of this when, at the age of ten, I already organized my life as a spinster? The truth is I never reflected upon it, my preoccupations having always been so different.

Today, for the first time, I wonder if I ought to regret it. Amiel, fairly dangerous, like all the unsuccessful, said: "The best path of life still remains the regular path which, at the appointed hour, passes through all the initiations. . . . The

cross-roads tempt for some apparent reason; but it is rare not to have to regret having taken them."

. . . If I desire to broaden my existence by means of notoriety, it is certainly not for the recompense of "glory," but through a curiosity to find myself, perhaps, while there is yet time, in the presence of superior temptations. . . .

*June 3*

Materially, visibly, there is a centrifugal force in me. My chair is always drawn aside so as not to render too conspicuous the apparent indifference of my reading. Below, they are a "*party*," [1] and here am I. I school myself to love something in this flight. Certainly, it can not be the goal! But I like to see in it a fine preparation. I seem to myself to be preciously guarded. Why?

*June 5*

Intelligence and self-possession will always be preferred and better respected than the most divine goodness.

Even without knowing it, it is impossible to imitate save in order to surpass.

*Thursday, August 9*

Ah! the poverty, the slovenliness, the shame of daily oral life.

What men say to each other!

[1] In English. Tr.

*August 10*

I do not believe in pride. It is a sin invented by humility. The day when people refuse any longer to take the irresponsible self-sufficiency of fools for pride, they will be astonished how little remains of it.

Pride and humility are man's judgments on himself. They may be false and ignorant, according to the structure of the brain which produces them; they can be neither culpable nor virtuous.

Their mental worth being equal, it is impossible for one man to be more humble than another. The difference of attitude will be determined by a thousand other things than "his sentiment of himself," and will be wholly superficial.

Now, admitting the existence of such a thing as a coalman's pride, it would afford a proof of such moderation that we should be obliged to respect it as we respect his faith,[1] and that it would represent the height of humility. Moral: proud people have very small pretentions, and pretentions surely have no pride.

Then humility is safe.

I love books which, from one end to the other, seem to speak in a whisper. If not, it is the public drum.

There is in me an illusion, if not of liberty, at least of indifference, which is my greatest resistance to determinism.

[1] "Foi du charbonnier"—proverbial expression. Tr.

*Sunday, August 12*

We accustom ourselves to nothing, habit makes nothing easy for us, time does not restore. The repercussions of every ill are infinite, our losses absolute: Only we are absent-minded, unintelligent, heedless as monkeys, too coarse-grained to suffer as much as we should. We find mistaken consolation.

No matter if we are so strongly steeped in cheerfulness as to believe ourselves impermeable, sadness slowly overtakes us. I am better, and my return to the light brings me no joy. I am sadder than last year, than five years ago, when in the full shock of the catastrophe.

From time to time I shake myself: After all, what do I want? I am full of good will. All I ask is not to take things tragically any longer; and, for nothing in the world, would I choose the life of those who are happy. Why am I not cheerful? The reason is that there is not this or that, there is not happiness, there is not love, there is *life*. And life was I. Never to be stricken so near to the heart. O blessed mirth, you are but sound, light and movement! I literally cannot write fiction because I cannot leave myself.

Such cold moon-rises! A imperial violet from the Far East, and the zenith tinged with green like an old ivory. The lunar icicle came drifting across it, formless, dented.

High-tide, the beach filled like a cup. The huge

empty plain heaves calmly onward; the bay is in better order. The sea attains the circumference, the sandy circuit, beach and water are hermetically joined, and the great depths are close at hand, as on shipboard; the dune is a deck. No waves, the wind weighs them down. Slow streaks of foam slip aside, pass before us, one after the other, like a river current.

*Wednesday, August 15*

They always subordinate intelligence to the heart. O obstinacy! I have made my observations: without lettered refinement, no delicacy. If they knew how often they shock me with all their talk of heart! Yes, how they shock my deep, sincere sentiments.

It is not the religion of responsibility or of the will which makes conception difficult for me, or rather the imagination of determinism, but so deep a sentiment of indifference! Truly the dead are too silent in me. My atavism has not sufficiently determined me. It often leaves me embarrassed.

Besides, determinism should be able to bring about accidental liberties. Heredities end by crossing to such an extent, and cancelling each other. . . . By dint of having been determined in every direction, our will, coming from so far, is perhaps more conscious and more forewarned, more advantageous, than it would be in the state of free will.

*Thursday, August 20*

Sadness bores me. I woke up this morning without yet understanding the necessity of living. This affects the locomotive faculties. I am seized by paralysis in the midst of a movement.

Nothing comes, nothing goes. I have no sensation of changing from day to day. I find myself always with both feet on the same minute. Besides, I do not like myself. I do not know how it is that I am more tortured by myself than by another.

Mama said to me that she had been mistaken in an article. "It was useless for me skip, skip; the more I skipped, the stupider it became!"

Aline said that men were marrying less, and I answered gravely: "Women also."

"He is good-looking, not brilliant and odious, a common air," said mother, and I added: "Yes, and not congenially common."

On the sidewalk with M . . . , white costume, black reveres, my Aiglon uniform, nothing in my hands, no sunshade. A man was watering. M . . ., as I passed, lifted the nozzle of the hose with his cane. The man was about to protest, then looked up and watched us pass by. The most subtle social homage pleases us less than such an act.

It is delicious to be seen in public with a being — man or woman—of your own style and race. It is above all in walking that these affinities are enjoyed. Instinct of gratitude towards bodies which

move in your manner, which were launched into life under the rhythm of a same law.

Quite aside from love, the sensual system of physical sympathies enmeshes us, isolates us or binds us together.

*September 18*

I see the stars again. I no longer wonder whether they are round or whether they have horns. The other evening, for the first time in ten years, I breathed the whole sky.

I insist upon money. The best thing a disinterested girl can do, if she loves a poor young man, is to refuse energetically to encumber his life. I should have bravely accepted a mercenary marriage. If she is rich, an intelligent woman can always lead a distinguished, generous, influential life—a finer thing, after all, than a vulgarly happy existence.

On the other hand, a woman seemed to me more bound by a money-marriage than by a love-marriage. In the second case it is a matter of honesty; in the first, of honor.

Marie, who is irritated by my scepticism—she is a true pragmatist, busy with a heap of things—ended by telling me that, to get some reasonable ideas, I should be a cow for three days!

"Oh! I should jump off the cliff!"

That is what they all do here. Suicide or accident? Thus I never sit on the beach without saying: "I am afraid a cow will fall on my head!"

*Brest, Rue Voltaire, October 2*

The value of memories, happiness in the past, spring from the fact that we *accept* them, like all that is absolutely irrevocable. We never consent to the present; we are hardly in it. If we accepted it completely, we could give it the nostalgic sweetness of things deeply buried in us, of reminiscences.

Convalescence and the charm, identical in its passiveness, of travel, of the *journey*, show us clearly, by contrast, that we do not accept the other moments of our life.

I love these old rooms in the old houses of old people. They are usually red, and Empire. They look out on courts. The ceiling is very high and it is dark in them. They contain many objects because they are also, in reality, storerooms. An elegant modern room I should discuss. Here, we have to do with accepted things, dead rooms, and we love them definitively, like the past.

Shall I ever understand how an intelligent man can love fishing? Joubert says that the pleasure of the hunt is the pleasure of attaining. Well, the pleasure of fishing is the pleasure of awaiting.[1]

*October 5*

The abuse of images and of words which are too literary—the style of a second-rate actor. What gentleman cannot successfully write today his

[1] Play on words in the French—*atteindre, attendre*. Tr.

page of good Lorrain, of good P. Adam?[1] Simpler, ever simpler. Avoid verbiage, even aesthetic verbiage.

*October 8*

Naive to believe that, because you have arranged the stages in a certain order, this is more advanced than that—to believe that other people lag behind you—to say "you will reach this point"—to believe yourself more advanced at one hour than at another. We no longer believe in progress for humanity, yet we believe in it for the individual!

We change, that is all; but we gain nothing by it, not even experience, that makeshift of pretensions.

*Paris, hotel, October 18*

Those who despise ambition.

"Ich verachte dein verachten." The goal of such an ambition may be contemptible, but ambition alone exceeds it. Perhaps I desire nothing that ambition can give, but I could not live without being ambitious. I conceive life only as a series of steps to climb. Change is a human necessity. Why not change for the better?

Great God! what is there for us to do in this world if we are not ambitious—ambitious of the hardest happiness? And as, in the last analysis, opulence and greatness are pleasures which yield only to the very strong in the *struggle for life*,[2] since

[1] Jean Lorrain, Paul Adam. Tr.
[2] English in the original. Tr.

they are the most fought for, I see no reason why we should not accord to these fat spoils an important part in our appetites.

Yes, those who succeed often miss something, but those who fail always miss something.

We have too much depreciated success. It is very petty point of view.

I treat myself as never before. A wild determination to be happy. I do not want to be miserable through force of habit, through inertia. It is a perpetual renewal of contradiction: Yes! Yes! I must be happy!

I want to believe in myself, in my future, like an idiot! I forbid myself to judge it by the present. And, as for this, I ask it to be only a step, but a step which I shall not detest through routine, through unreasoned antipathy.

At the *Centennale*, the landscapists: Corot, Daubigny: *La Mare*. A river and its trees in the mist, by Huet; and, best of all, above all, Millet, *Le Laboureur remettant sa veste!* I have never had such an impression of evening. And the star on the edge of the cloud is so vesperal! It is not an ordinary star, a star for great occasions. You feel that it, too, is about to steal away, like the plough-man—that nothing will be left in the picture. . . .

My lateness in life, as I see the others advance, strangers to all reflection, to all consciousness of regret, the agony of the impossible overtaking, as

in a nightmare. What have I given up—ten years lost, and what years!

To know how to choose one's own mask.

Above all we want to be simple. One is so grateful to us for it. Ah! the clever combination: not to be a nuisance, for nature has no right to be anything but good. Well! not at all. Do you want an authentic nature? Consider the animals, if you please. What a truthful reflection of their soul in their eyes, in their gestures, in their yawnings! . . . At bottom they lack good nature, do they not?

*Saturday*

We were talking of *Le Jardin Secret*,[1] which I do not know, as a matter of fact; but I said that, to deceive others for their happiness, was to commit an indiscretion—that we have no right to defraud anyone in his relations with his destiny.

*December 25*

In the toy department of the Bon Marché, there was a very smart man, with his wife and his mother-in-law, all laughing together. This family scene made me somber. "We are entering upon the age of continuous sadness," said Flaubert. Then how old do you think I am, O God?

*27*

"There is not a man condemned to any number

[1] Novel by Marcel Prévost. Tr.

of years of hard labour who accepts his lot as something positive, definitive, as part of his real life. It is instinctive. He feels he is not *at home.*

"And I should like to continue to live after leaving prison!"

How is it I have waited so late to read *House of the Dead?* One thing only bothers me: from such an adventure Dostoïevski, then, got only that? There is enough in it for a year of prison; there is not enough for ten!

He is still at the stage of that unreflecting vanity of suffering, of those little economies of pain which console everyone. He could not have been very intelligent, in spite of all his talent—the impression which Tolstoï gives me too.

## 1901

*January 14*

The perfect man would know how to employ systematically, through virtue, the sum of energy, of ruse, of application, which criminals alone employ today. Even a simple news item, the plan and execution of a burglary, fills us with wonder. So much taste for their interests, such genius for living, in men like ourselves! So much leisure to think of their own advantage! Refined people lose the seriousness of egotism.

"Idle ever-muttering servitor, blush then that

there should be men who are more bent upon their ruin than you upon your salvation, and for whom vanity has more charm than truth for you!"

We must create ourselves artificial desires. Indifference is as natural as death. Solitary prides are so poor! I believe, moreover, that the respect of solitude for the solitude's sake is artificial. Solitude is idle when it is not a preparation.

But to cast a spell upon intelligences and sensibilities worthy of my own. . . . I dare say nothing of the future which I foresee. I need an eloquent life, burning fluid. . . . Men do not suspect what they might do if there were less waiting and less slumber in their days, less filling.

No longer a material obstacle, every kind of rapidity having been won by science and wealth. Not a blemish on independence. To see a treason against one's self in all frequenting, whether of men or of countries, which is not expressly willed. To transport energy, meditation, the tension of solitude into our relations with our true fellows. No love, perhaps, but rare, difficult, exalted, robust friendships. To live as we would relive in a spirit of detachment, of anxiety and of revenge.

*Sunday, February 3*

Pronouncing of vows at the Oratory. You would have believed yourself in a haunt of iconoclasts: barer than a temple—whitewash, and ground-glass in the rose-windows. However, not poverty, the

simplicity of a noble house. The orphan girls took up the collection in silver-gilt, and sacerdotal ornaments of the greatest splendour.

Ceremony in the manner of Huysmans—a liturgy, a race, an abbatial heraldry. The Oratory, barely restored for the women, is at the chosen hour of founders' vocations, a conventual aristocracy. The celebrant, Jacques de Pitray, grandson of the Comtesse de Ségur, flanked by two Franciscans, tall, straight, slender, monks, men of the world, who never lower their eyes and never smile, said a slow, archaic mass, learnedly reconstituted after that at Solesmes.

Ah! whatever is done nobly, gravely, in a loftier manner. . . .

The women, black and white, in their stalls, behind the light grating which separated but did not conceal them, were not less proud, less sacerdotal. They were rigid, with "that high religious bearing" prescribed for them. To bend neither to right nor to left "is our mortification," said Mère de Sales-Chappuis.

The Mother Superior is on her knees, at the grating, awaiting Communion. Her face is there, quite near, worn by meditation. Her veil falls peaceful, continued by the line of the robe, her hands clinging to the surplice, which covers them — a soldier at "present arms" in the presence of a chief. The devout would do well to study this monastic simplicity.

*February 7*

*We imitate ourselves very badly.* We have neither the intelligence, the audacity, nor the strength of our sincerity. Why do we not seek it? It is not only our written, printed thought which should interpret us. We should think with our voice, our smile, our body—be a fine, stylistic construction from head to foot. A woman especially ought to want this.

What Father Gratry said, that it is not souls which refuse to love, but the majority of human beings to deserve love. We are all more or less ridiculous and tiresome, lazy, cowardly and negligent. Of all the lives we can live, we choose the exemplary minima. Oh! I understand all the sentimental "treasons." It is not they that begin!

*Wednesday 13*

It might be said that we have a *draught of solitude*, that our soul creates a vacuum, and that it needs a pressure of virgin space, of isolation, to keep its water-line.

And not only our souls, our bodies also. How can we resist the suppression of the cellular system? Without going so far, what torture it is to walk to a step not our own, how all the rhythms revolt! What exhausting refutation for our nerves are the mute physiological contradictions! I imagine love as an exceptional concordance of movement, the miracle of the double star.

*Saturday 16*

I have made a progress. I begin to suspect *the art of suppressions.* This does not mean rejecting the poor, but also the excellent. We must learn to express ourselves through what we do not say. There must be silences in prose, as in music. It is easy, with our verbal experience, to welcome all thought, to make a work of art of it.

But we isolate, hence give form, with the void only. Beware of saying everything, of making life too eloquent. "I die!" will never equal the least sigh for emotion.

To deliver literature from its loquacity. And—paradox—is it not the dramatic form which gives the sharpest contour to life? The author, the description, the narrative, everything which is only grammatical form, is suppressed.

*18*

I can no longer read: mannerism everywhere. It is impossible to avoid spiritualistic manias. Oh! the angels, the lamps and the doors of Maeterlinck! The mirrors, the window-panes, the chandeliers, the bells of Rodenbach! The arrows, the hours, the desires and things "let fly" of d'Annunzio. A rattle of metaphors—that is what we live on. It affects the artlessness of facile antitheses, the childishness of plays on words. . . . And that is what carries us away!

One word, one syllable is the key to the literary

sky: *As*. A writer will banish it, but its spirit will hover over each turn of the phrase; and, if a literary pope took it into his head to mitigate the observance of this "as," all would fall into ruin, there would be no more style. For method in letters is the same as in science: classifying, finding relations. It is the same operation of the mind which finds beautiful metaphors and which makes fine mathematical discoveries.

"For," said Laplace, "discoveries consist in bringing together ideas which are susceptible of union and which were previously isolated."

*Monday 25*

The thought of death rarely leaves me, but that does not make it any sweeter for me. I have never wished to die. I have never had the easy tastes which simplify matters.

What my eyes lack is harder for me to bear than the total absence of hearing. If I had to choose, I would say: eyes more and more, and I would always sacrifice the ears to one of their improvements—to the upward flight towards space and light.

My life depends upon measured, anticipated improvements. No place for accessory desires, happiness and the rest. But, at each improvement in my eyes, I seem to become less deaf.

*March 1st*

"Mme. de Montespan," said Saint Simon, "was radiantly beautiful to the end"—66 years old. The

Great Catherine was loved until the age of 67. The Empress of Austria must have been 60 when she dazzled Christomanos.

Draw your conclusion, miserable women, incapable of counting after forty.

"And man doth not yield himself to the angels nor to death utterly, save only through the weakness of his feeble will." [1]

*April 12*

I discover that, in "an intelligent milieu," individual intelligence is not more frequent than elsewhere, and this is more annoying; for, not to speak in a superior fashion of superior things, is the most stupid of absurdities. The commonplaces of transcendency makes us adore those of politeness.

Ah! how these memories of Mlle. de Meysenbürg's make us love the witty jades! How this "idealist" gives the ideal the seductiveness of an old dress which she has worn and of which she offers you the *"wearing out!"* [1]

There is not in the space of these two volumes which brought her, at Rome, the pilgrimages of enthusiastic admirers, a single improvised sentence, produced in her poor brain—the brain of a democratic *backfisch.*

Oh! the maddening commonplaceness of "beautiful souls"! And this young lady was a friend of Nietzsche. . . .

[1] In English. Tr.

And the women of high culture, "the intellectual companions of their husbands," those who take life like a lesson—no, like a course at the Sorbonne, a lecture with notes! Who make of each of their little adventures a pretext for writing, of each book they read, for the exercise of their "literary judgment:" "It would take a better pen than mine." Ah! the spring with its "shoots bursting with sap" and the light which "presides" and the descriptions in which are seen "here and there" and the "fine skies" and the "purity of line" of the mountains; for stereotyped phrases evolve, and it is obligatory to talk like the masters of contemporary literature.

Travellers have kept the epistolary traditions of "correspondences" published before the railroads and the discovery of foreign lands by all our men of letters. Then, if they attach importance to their impressions, let them write a diary. I perceive that it is the sole means of restoring correspondence to its proper destination.

God preserve me from writing in the future a "very interesting letter!" Books only should be permitted to speak, because to them alone plagiarism is forbidden. Beings really steeped in thought and human sentiment have no need of these transcendent epistles which contain for them things as commonplace as "rain and shine."

The telegram and effusions like those of Marquise de Maugiron: the ideal of a correspondence which is not mere spinning of phrases.

How is it that there are painters of women? They end by cheapening themselves like Carolus Duran. Whereas men's portraits permit breadth, variety. . . . Woman is possibly only up to the lower jaw. She should be painted naked, veiled by her hair.

Why does Carrière paint only our death masks?

*May 8*

Sometimes I listen. It is an extraordinary respite. Memories come back to me from very far away, and help me to recognize what a stranger I have become.

It seems to me that things—the least little externalities—are more me than myself. It is when I meditate that I am lost. Heedless fools, do not seek "to look into your hearts." There is nothing within. I know it because I was punished by being put into a corner at a time when there were as yet no memories.

And it is always tunes that bring me home best. Has it ever been remarked that tunes are the one human thing in the world which does not change? . . . An old tune reaches us from a greater distance than the words which accompany it; and yet language already survives the race. We may be sure that, somewhere in the world, there is heard the modulated cry of the first singing throat.

We must live to avenge ourselves for death.

"Whence it follows, reasoning as we do, that

wisdom is not measure, wisdom being inseparable from Beauty; for—there is no way of denying it—never, or with very few exceptions, do measured actions in the course of life, appear to us more beautiful than those which are accomplished with energy and speed. . . .

"And even were it true, dear friend, that actions, more beautiful through measure than through force and speed, were as numerous as the others, that would not give us the right to say that wisdom consists rather in acting with measure than with force and rapidity. . . . Nor that a measured life is wiser than one without measure." (Plato: *Charmides.*)

*Vannes, Tuesday*

Reading does not calm. Whatever the value of our curiosity, reading does not mean ceasing to wait. Reading is the life of others. It is looking, it is resting. We should read only to spur ourselves on, as in pious reading, in order to give back the exact sum of what we have taken.

But to read as I read, to read for the sake of reading, *always to read.* To read more than one talks, to read more than one moves, to read more than one sees! To read from the age of 16 to the age of 26!

"Our life is only movement."

Oh! that *motus animae continuus,* of which Cicero speaks—that must be the intellectual life.

And then the open air, full hours under every inclination of sun and moon. . . . Life indoors is abnormal and monstrous. I made a vow this morning as I left the cathedral, before those ramparts and their moat, their machicoulis and their Tour du Connétable, standing out clearly in the morning light, cut in hard sky, ligneous and fresh, like tree-trunks on the edge of a lofty wood—I promised myself, I swore to live out-of-doors, in the sun—to live and die under my parasol borne further abroad through the world than the sword of a crusader.

The wandering parasol of the Empress of Austria.

*Lorient, June 1st*

I have again seen Darcy, the hero of Peking, and I was astonished at the unaccustomed simplicity with which, instinctively, I made advances and, as it were, paid homage to this young man.

Oh! I do not represent feminine enthusiasm, social recompense of masculine celebrity! A notoriety which I do not share, has no reason to excite my profoundly realistic asceticism. But there you are! . . . had I been a sovereign, I should have known how to welcome heroes.

Evidently my aesthetic instinct aroused me. Had Darcy not been so profoundly simple that it was almost embarrassing—with that mortal simplicity of the gravely ill which cannot compass the shadow

of a smile—had the absolute exhaustion caused by his late return from China not placed upon that face, the calm of the wounded and that gravity yearning, as it were, for a happy heedlessness, well, without doubt I should have had little enough respect for him. But, in the presence of this man whom death, in person, has come to test, I understood the initiatory equality of all kinds of courage, and the adequacy, up to a certain point, of all the values.

Death, beautiful and alone efficacious, you only can refine life. All is coarse compared with him who escapes from your hands.

"She speaks very well," said the doctor. "She follows the conversation. I tell you that she fools us and that she is not deaf."

Well, yes, I wonder: do I not really fool myself?

What we know of the unconscious in sleep, trances, absent-mindedness, shows us that the unconscious is not a suspension of material or spiritual life. The activity of the body is more normal than ever in sleep, and the dream, the hypnotic trance, absent-mindedness even, testify to a mental activity superior to that of the conscious state. Then, what are consciousness and personality? Nothing but the *cohesion* of the two lives. In the "return to one's self," this is caught in the act.

To be: to feel one's body and one's thought the most simultaneously possible. An electric encounter of the soul and of the body. That is why our

present is so short, our instants are so infinitesimal. We exist only by sparks.

Thus our thinking and living atoms may be immortal, but give consciousness no guarantee of survival.

*June, 1910, Brutul, Tuesday*

Is it really necessary to persist in not esteeming, in counting as naught, the negative pleasure of a cure? Are not my horror, my defiant attitude, my resistance to the relative happiness, "by comparison," exaggerated? Is there even anything else? A happiness in itself? It is an elementary definition which we feel only by contrast.

Never mind; with this system, a scoundrel who eats is happy. We need, in order to avenge ourselves, a happiness as alien to happy people as unhappiness.

In this nervous world, all authoritative, instructive, sentimental, educational, beneficient supremacy is merely magnetism. We are nothing so long as we do not act upon others magically, by a charm, a sorcery. They know it and despise us, unconsciously and without any intimation.

There are two castes: the hypnotizers and the hypnotized. Men have taste. They do not pardon not being seduced. The fact of your superiority is nature's affair, but to persuade others of it regards yourself alone. I have the religious taste for attitudes. A first-rate soul which lets another,

graver, simpler and haughtier pass along beside it, has humbled itself irremediably. Whatever intimate consciousness—that soothing personal approbation—may pretend, inferiority has existed, and not merely in the form.

When, then, shall we acknowledge the absolute existence of the sign? We are nothing but what we were in our flesh, as it was visible at any given moment and as memory has judged it.

One must, O Saint-Just, carry one's head like a Holy Sacrament in order to avenge one's self in advance for all the baskets.

I am twenty-six, and I can really despise only myself. You Christian!

*Sunday, June 23*

The moral of my *footing* [1] at quick-step to raise my spirits a trifle: you should always have fever on pain of death. Practical resolution: *Never think* of what I cannot help—health, lack of money—to get out of the habit of dwelling upon the obstacle of defeat, and especially of patience—of all that medley of hopes which induces sur-excitation. To want to exist only on the ground where action is possible, for the will destroys itself the moment it accepts time as an ally. Thereafter everything is left to it to accomplish. To count only on self, not even to count on time.

To meditate tomorrow three-quarters of an hour

[1] English in the text. Tr.

during my morning walk: "In order to obtain the victory over men and things, nothing is better than perseverance in exalting one's self and in magnifying one's own dream of beauty and domination." (Il Fuoco.)

I never pass a well without carefully looking into it. It is one of life's finest sensations. An inward mood so spontaneous, another world so invisible and so near. . . . Suddenly, as it were, a profound silence, an exclusively moral impression of depth.

The three human calamities: stupidity, ugliness and sloth.

To create one's self a happiness with what remains . . . to amuse one's self by picking up the pieces! Blind men have been sculptors, deaf men have lectured, armless men have painted with their feet (Museum at Dijon). Mme. Galleron de Calonne, Carmen Sylva's friend, made verses to the sun and to her husband, whom she could not see. That shocks me. These acrobatics of suffering remind me of the undertaker's assistant: since he knew his business, he could bury himself!

Music is that which has done most to redeem woman today. She derives from the rhythms with which she electrifies herself, another psychic movement, another manner of marking the time of her life; and the pulsation of the masters, coming to strike her veins, acts almost gymnastically upon her formlessness of body and soul.

*July 5*

Life is miraculous enough to be always sufficient; and, were we not limited beings *forced to choose*, we should probably never consent to be bored.

But, being unable to live utterly, days of low pressure become unbearable, because they are strong life lost, stolen. There is, in boredom, an element of comparison, an unsatisfied desire, quite as much as a satiety.

Boredom is the state of grace of scepticism.

I absolutely never choose my reading. There is never but one book which I can read at a given moment, and this decides the next. Do not read if you need "programmes" and "methods," and if you do not understand to what extent reading imposes its obligations.

They may say of Loti what they will, but when I can no longer stand a sentence of literature, I still read him.

There is only physical life: to have roamed under every sky. At bottom, in the very form of the most intellectual elucubrations, there is nothing but its apotheosis.

Contemplation, action? There is no essential difference. One must only know whether he wishes to live his life in the first or the second degree.

What shall I invent to console myself for the navy? "To return on board" the evening boat, to inhabit the Oceans, sleep off-shore? . . . Have you ever looked upon the horizon as a place to "return"?

Predominant nostalgia this time, on re-reading Loti—this return to the open sea, this thrill of escape, of safe isolation on regaining one's anchorage. . . .

*Saturday 20*

In spite of the fact that I am a little like Mme. de Sévigné, "always of the opinion of the last speaker," I believe I shall never have a very high regard for Schopenhauer. The Byronic poet of pessimism is too German for my Latinity. Schopenhauer is a literary philosopher, and the scientific philosophers, like Herbert Spencer, have accustomed me to a greater rigour. He is also very weak in his exposition, very oddly garrulous, and he kills you with comparisons. They do not amuse me and, the more abundant they are, the more their probative nullity annoys me. The gentleman is also too affirmative. He is going to precipitate me on Hegel and Fichte.

If a talented system could issue from a feminine philosophy, I should picture it to myself as exposed in this fashion.

Saint-Just. . . . The Revolution bores me after Thermidor. The Girondins' eloquence? But take a report by Saint-Just; Vergniaud is a phrase-maker, an imitator compared with him.

A single thing bothers me: his astonishing, almost lyrical affection for Robespierre. An ambitious man's virtuosity? Did this over-young dictator choose a regent for his minority? There are days

when I feel tolerably curious as to the "inner states" of this "fanatic."

Certain shades of affection belong almost more to our habits of politeness than to our sentimental customs, and on a much greater scale than might be believed.

*1901, Trez-Hir, July 25*

The box containing my copy-books, my whole journal for ten years, my first work nearly finished, projects, notes and all that I copied, when I believed in copying, was thought to be lost. In short, ten years of existence, drop by drop—my ten terrible years which Providence has striven so hard to render original—drop by drop preserved in such a way that I counted upon it—upon this makeshift of a will—to die with a little less anger in my heart.

Mama has not slept because of it. As for myself, I have verified that nothing worse could happen to me, that a great illness would have robbed me less, less demolished me. . . . Then I must be a monster, since once again I have had to do with that minimum of emotion which is always my lot. My interior orientations have possibilities of about-face! I have a facility for *quid mihi* in circumstances where I can no longer do anything! My instinct of preservation is too skilful, it has functioned too much. And then I have philosophic imagination. A reasoning, a moral reflection clothes me from head to foot, like a sensation.

But what happiness to have recovered my box.

It will never travel again without every precaution being taken.

To come back here, after nine months, feverish with emotion at being brought face to face with the landmarks so carefully noted, scanned: the entrance to the harbour, the coast opposite, the Tas-de-Pois, the Raz de Sein. How much better do I see? Enough for a year of existence, for a year of youth? And, in the mirrors, have my eyes become more beautiful in shape, in transparency, in colour, in expression? Enough gained for a year? Shall I have time to be pretty? . . . I should want myself until I was sixty, I should want myself until death, to atone, to compensate.

*Friday, August 9* .

A silence. I have not worked for three months; but my eyes are getting well, and I belong body and soul to this cure. Cured, I should be such a different person. . . . Oh! yes! To think it is possible somewhere to be blind to the world. . . .

I recognize my life, my childhood life. I come back to the point where I left myself:

"Quand je me résignais déjà,
la croyant morte,
C'est mon âme d'enfant
qui ressuscite en moi." [1]

Yes, it is just that: not only things, but the atmosphere between them and us, which is the

[1] See page 90. Tr.

*taste* of life. I recognize that indefinable element which can be only I, and which returns from so far! Getting well slowly, getting well late, is a dreadful thing. It is now that I no longer stand anything: "They see nothing which makes enough of a mark to measure the time they have lived . . . and nevertheless, like those who awake, they feel they have slept long."

Were I one of those who demand explanations of life . . .

So much soul and fluid have been restored to me by my eyes, that I seem able, all by myself, to take charge of my ears. And then, what does it matter? Perfect eyes, eyes which avenge me increasingly, eyes worthy of me, in short beautiful hard eyes to say boldly: No.

Yesterday, an evening such I had never known, the light already very dim, a *translucidity*, a quality of atmosphere, an evening like a morning.

Day before yesterday, so pure, so even a gray, such an equilibrium of sky, of shores and of sea, so absolute a gray serenity that you would have said it was another planet where the land would be such a blue, where the glow would be gray.

A certain degree of complaisance and of readiness to oblige is akin to gossip. . . .

You, all your life, will oblige me by being restless, which in no wise prohibits deep inwardness of attitude and of the appearances of life.

Not to let one's self be caught by the comfortable

disdain for the inaccessible, by the laziness which does not follow every fancy, by the self-satisfied carelessness of the social parking-system.

There is not a possibility of which I do not feel the certitude in me. Like Bussy d'Amboise, I have never read of an action of which I did not feel myself capable.

*Thursday, August 15*

I remember that, at Le Villars de Lans, August 15, 1891, at a time when I used to pray without prayer-book, and without a slip, through a whole high mass—I remember having postponed from August 15 to August 15, and I foresaw: in ten years' time . . .

Well, O God, I begin again: in ten years I shall still be young, after all; and, besides, I shall have loved youth so little!

I do not even love any longer that unpleasant moral age, that too enduring childhood.

I have situated my life from 30 to 50. But those twenty years I must have. In return for which I accept the past and I love it for having made me what I am: exceptional.

I employ this word in the exact sense, without any idea of superiority.

*August 21*

Still improvement to be made with my eyes.
This winter, lip-reading, a publication.

To go out with the Oratorians in order to decide my life from the point of view of charity.

To place myself. I want Paris only. And to receive as soon as my lips begin to speak.

I see from other people's lives that I can count only on myself, even to create an environment.

To put off Italy so long as I am anxious "without estate and, as it were, without being."

*August 25*

They believe themselves nervous because they are impatient, because they are restless and become unbearable about a delay, an unpleasant practical task, because they are upset, sick over an uncertainty, a lost object. Nervous, since there is no other word, but what nerves!

It is the refinement of our race which renders such coarse-grained nervousness impossible for us. How many things leave nervous people calm! What imperturbability when our teeth are on edge a thousand times a day! To use Baudelaire's expression, what impermeability!

A natural reaction renders me, on the contrary, more amiable with regard to a piece of drudgery, packing, tidying.

I am quite convinced of the luxurious superfluity of these "practical necessities," of the amusing gratuitousness of our whim to exist.

I cannot help pitying life and always, each second, I am with it in aesthetic emotion; and it is for the

boors, who make a noise, that I keep all my nerves.

Now, I have not at all reached this point through philosophy. I was born so, and I remain persuaded that every cheerful being, "endowed with a happy character," if devoid of any alloy of imbecility, is perfectly aesthetic without knowing it, living under a charm still very little known.

*August 28*

With us, what awkwardness in living, what inaptitude for a whole world of immediate and passing pleasures. Beasts, on the contrary, are admirable—an incredible concern for their well-being. The ingeniousness of a chicken-roost, for example, in benefiting by a ray of sunshine, or of a poodle in taking possession of dress-trains to sleep on comfortably. What clever, almost deliberate Epicureans!

*September 2*

I am nervous and tormented without a minute's respite. To have done nothing for myself as yet! I neither enjoy anything nor desire any joy. I shall experience no external well-being so long as I have not settled these intimate questions.

*To do something worthy of me.* And I do it when I work, but I keep putting off completions, the final acceptance.

I don't want to read again as long as I live. I am killing myself with reading.

At the end of the beach the cliff forms a narrow

arch. From above, following the path of the revenue-officers, it was strange to see the sea pass, like a big white cat, through its hole.

*September 7*

Surely I shall not have the apostolic incredulity. What they understand! It is always the easy argument, of the lowest order, which moves them and troubles them.

Who is the man—the woman especially—capable of making a physical, intellectual, moral effort—who wishes to make it, even?

I can scarcely gain credence when I say that the occult sciences interest me less than the others. No dull mistrust with regard to them! But "occult phenomena," which are, moreover, rather monotonous, amuse me no more than chemical phenomena. They astonish me even less, for I might have imagined them.

A fact, however extraordinary, is of very little importance in its relation to us. It is the commentary, the human effort to seize it, the hypothesis, the method, which gives it real extension, and which interests us.

Well! the occult sciences have not had their man of genius. They have augmented effort no more than they have the human dream. They have enriched our imagination less than a single step in astronomy and geology. They have discovered nothing.

I am leagues from anti-mysticism. I should even be annoyed were there nothing unknowable; but my conception of mystery is far too high and too general for me to believe myself nearer it at any given moment than at another. Mystery is everywhere, and not here and there. Science does not set out, moreover, to "encounter it." It has long known what it will never understand. It is even alone in knowing this. You cannot give mystery another place than that which science has assigned it. You cannot even furnish it with a new postulate. Science, kneeling before mystery, communicating there daily through the sacramental bread and wine of its "latest ideas," has no reason to get up to salute it here or there. No more than Saint Louis found any to leave the Holy Sacrament at the announcement that Christ was passing through the street.

To M. B. So much the worse for me! I need to be esteemed, to put it mildly; for I also put into my preferences a sentiment very near to admiration. I love that only which is superior. To yield, I need to be seduced. . . .

*September 20*

I am deadened. Sometimes I am afraid of being cured, terrified at the work of atonement.

I no longer have anything to say.

In order to have any new insight into my psychology, to fish up again this Journal which bids fair to flag, I must be cured.

I pass the hand—a warning to those who have won in the lottery of Saint Guillotine. . . .

Even so if there were not music! I can not pardon music. What a lot of it I have left! I am pursued by it. All one day Liszt's *Hungarian Rhapsodies*, Beethoven's sonatas. I was not yet able, alas! to play the symphonies. The Largo from the *Schiller Marsch* which I loved so much when I was a little girl. A few half-phrases, scarcely a bar of the orchestra. Those breaths from the whole of the *Roi d'Ys*.

And the childhood memories, the four-hand deciphering of Mendelsohn, the *Retour au Pays*, the *Grottes de Fingal*, Athalie! From Trez-Hir to Brest the passion for *Ruy Blas* did not leave me. . . .

Then it is Aunt Alice, while we little girls struggled through a game of whist with Uncle Albert. I am scolded for my mistakes because I listen to her as she begins softly: "*Guide au bord ta nacelle, ô fille du pêcheur . . .*," in her contralto as simple and warm as the voice of a woman of the people, while Mama, always gently, with her fine well-trained organ, takes the tierce and continues.

And Schubert's *Ave Maria*, which I arranged for piano, like the *Echoes of Germany* also. And Mama who had to be begged so hard one day when she was trying a dress on me, to indicate vaguely, without words and with continual stops which made me afraid she would not finish it, the celebrated *Adieu* which it annoyed me not to know.

I have heard it one other time only, played so nervously, so ridiculously, by my dear M. L.

And nothing, nothing of Wagner, save a march from *Lohengrin.*

Mama already sang some of him, however. Perhaps it is one of those nameless things which come back to me as if somebody were playing them by my side. What is it that brings them?

*September 30*

It is only when you awake from the syncope that you know what has happened to you, that you have the emotion of nearness to death. How is it we make the word "resurrection" a synonym for joy? What weight of melancholy would have to be lifted. . . . The discouragement of having too much to atone for.

*Vizac, October 8*

To Mama (too lazy to write here, I have only letters to mark my trail). It is frightful what it costs to die. That makes us forgive a great deal to Schopenhauer, who claims that life is a business which does not pay its expenses.

I believe, in fact, that it is solvent for a few people only —those who have enough to assume the debt in their own name.

*October 14*

Here, inland, it makes it gloomy now to have *but one sky.* It is like blinds closed on the other horizontal sky, doubling the force of each day.

*October 15*

Considering the extent of my surrender, I am struck to find myself still young. Humanity returns to me a little. I begin to regret happiness. I should always want it distinguished by everything else; but, after all, I should love it.

I read with delight Father Didon's letters to his "very exceptional daughter." Very Dominican, very naïvely oratorical, but very little humility, and that is good for a change. A fine audacity in predilection, an admirable confidence in despotic paternity, a superb exigency, like that of an apostle served by Magdalen! And words which move, words which shelter their humanity in Christ's robe and the black Dominican cloak. "I bless you with an infinite tenderness and send you my profound affection on the wings of this wind which enters my window and which comes from the immaculate heights of the glacier."

This passionate adventure, under cover of the two coarse white cowls of an expiatory order, does not displease me. Do you understand the glances of this monk and this nun, enamoured of their divine beauty, of these two beings who have no contact? "I have reserved you for God to whom alone, understand me well, you should belong, and the masterpiece will be accomplished."

Oh! these counsels! The assurance of these truisms! The light they kindle, their opportuneness, recall the orders given by civilian chiefs to

those fighting at the front. That "Hold out as long as possible, avoid losses of men, and surrender only at the last moment." When shall we abandon this pretention of being more competent in the affairs of others than they themselves?

Advice is an excellent stratagem for obliging another to occupy himself readily with that which does not interest him, in every sense of the word.

*September 20*

I saw some cows, eight or ten of them, standing stock-still at a gate. Behind them, on the level field, fell a great ruddy cloud bursting with sunlight. For the first time I understood the magnificence of cows. The muscles of their ears, the Iris-like diadem of those horns streaming with glory were superb, strange, impressive. It was the cow of India, the cow-god.

*Brest, All Saints*

Met this morning the funeral procession going to the cemetery of Kerfautras—service for sailors dead at sea. Magnificent flowers sent by the Russians, a millionaire's bouquet. I did not hear Chopin's *Marche Funèbre*, but it forced them to walk so slowly that it was really beautiful, and the presence of Russian uniforms, which we grow accustomed to see on all occasions of fraternal demonstration, gave world-wide significance to the

idea—a little narrow, a little familiar for us—of maritime traditions.

Oh! yes, I am the daughter of sailors. I am one in every cell, in every fibre; and I, so fastidious, who need to compare everything, to prefer everything, thank Destiny for having made me spring from a caste which I have no wish to repudiate.

The sailor has the grace of the athlete, the intelligence of a traveller, the distinction given by solitude, by the "silence of spaces," and also by the dangerous adventure. I am thinking less of the officers, but I have a passion for *my men*.

When I pass these charming serious faces, because they are so simple, because I know them to be adorably brave and childlike, I would like to press their hands, to clap them on the back like an old chief, I would like to decorate them! . . .

I could no longer find in the navy a setting for myself; but, if I married, I should have a very great nostalgic regret were I unable to wed a sailor.

Lacking kings, I should, like Madame, like to find only seamen in my family.

In my great-aunt's drawing-room, where I write this, there are big paintings, portraits of an admiral, of a commissary-general, and of two captains.

I can never think without revolt of the admiral-in-chief that my father would have been. I have followed Admiral F.'s career with passionate interest. Both merited the same future.

*1901, November 22*

I sometimes begin by not liking what I am going to like very much; for, in the case of Schopenhauer, I have reached that point now. I have the only real independence—I choose my submissions. It is true I bother very much less about choosing a doctrine, than about appreciating a man. Now this man is intelligent, he does not seek to *extract modesty* from his philosophy. He can say, with a good deal of distinction, a fine dignity of expression: Kant and I. It makes little difference to us whether Arthur Schopenhauer had humble sentiments concerning himself, in the spirit of the Imitation! He has the good taste to understand that this is a matter of indifference so far as metaphysics is concerned, and this self-esteem, added to merit, pleases me. It is astonishing how little need I have of other people's humility!

Unconscious advantages—if such things really exist—irritate and shock me, like things worn inappropriately: an opal on the neck of a marriageable maiden. Privilege is an affair of fatality; but knowing how to evaluate it, to enjoy it and to employ it, is much more our own.

Schopenhauer is capable of accusing Aristotle and Goethe of heaviness and incompetence. What connoisseur will expose the rubbish and platitudes which make up the bulk of Shakespeare, for example?

*December 1st*

However forewarned we may be, at bottom we protest. We do not imagine the isolation of humanity in the world, alone with the brutes and the plants. The *natura non facit saltus* demands the eternal soliloquy of the sole speaking being. . . .

*Monday 9*

I had always foreseen that the black moments would arrive at my present age. It is not before that calamities are the most terrifying. Their real action lies behind. It is in the closed past that they weigh and that they frighten. I shudder for these twelve years back of me, "this long space of a mortal life." It is being buried in a tunnel. Leaving, we still have behind us the light of the entrance.

*Thursday 19*

They study the history of art. They read, then they go to the Louvre regularly every week. Evidently I am wrong, but such a life chills me, freezes me to death. Oh! the intelligent milieus, all these women, these men also, "who are interested in everything," know books, pictures, music, settle down and do good intellectual business everywhere like shrewd, prudent citizens. . . . These people who learn all the languages, make all the voyages and will always remain so evidently commonplace! Ah! it is not intelligent things that make intelligent people!

Incapable of a variant on the ideas which they learn, on the judgments which they assimilate—and I am not thinking of the nullities, but of the average of those who are "very intelligent and very cultivated."

To Mme. D. . . . Besides, if that does not go without effort on my part, I shall rather refrain, having no reason to launch into disagreeable affairs, and attaching much less importance to the fact of being printed, than to the manner.

What concerns me is to finish. Afterwards we shall find a way out somehow. As for me, I shall go on to something else. I have begun with a novel, because it was easy to assemble all my notes; but I shall never be a novelist, feeling no need to seek, outside of life, even a plot and names. One must feel he has a good deal of leisure, when so many true things await our curiosity. I am starting work on a revolutionary who seems to me too little known—the youngest and, in my opinion, the leading actor of the Revolution, Robespierre's friend, Saint-Just. . . . We rid ourselves of so many moral curiosities with this easy word: A fanatic!

*Friday 20*

To succeed is nothing, it is an accident. But not to doubt one's self is quite another thing: it is a trait of character.

I do not know by what routine, what petty discretion, what superstition of a spell to be con-

jured by the prevision of failure, they attach a value to anticipatory scepticism.

Self-distrust is worthless either in heaven or on earth. Pretentions, on the contrary, have an essential value. They are a force before and after the failure. I employ my most virtuous resistance to immuring myself against wise counsels, to not permitting myself an apprehension: to what end after all? Sheer boastfulness in view of the failure always increasingly probable: "I told you so!"

In truth, the remedy is more shameful than the ill. What, then, do you expect to suffer, since you attach such importance to your anesthesia? What concern for your dear self-respect which, without doubt, would not survive a disappointment!

## 1902

*Thursday, March 13*

Profoundly, never, shall I be able to know whether I am at the highest pitch of discouragement or of energy, of hyperaesthesia or of impassibility. I seem to have attained a supreme degree—indifference or distress?—distance or depth?—I don't know, but definitive—from which I shall never again depart, for it closes everything; even to die, for it is final.

I should no longer know how either to take or to give happiness.

Aside from that, I am "charming and so gay!" they say. Well, yes, I am gay, since I have wit. You laugh when you have wit, just as you salute the bullets when you have nerves. That does not mean that you are afraid, or . . . And there is no need to admire me for it, for I beg you to believe that I do not feel under obligation of politeness towards circumstances. If I laugh, don't worry; it does not cost me any effort!

*To Mme. D., April 2*

I lack faith and taste to keep on in fiction. I have become disdainful for too many things. On the other hand, I feel the charm of lives exceptional by their beauty, by their evil, by their horror, and Saint-Just is superb. Not at all canonizable, in spite of his archangelic name; but I assure you that this strength and this rigidity can be excellent company.

To Andrée. I do nothing, I see nothing and want to see nothing. I am put in a corner until the moment of success. Perhaps I deem my ransom too dear. No matter, since it is I who pay.

*April 21*

"I despise the dust of which I am made and which addresses you. You can persecute this dust and put it to death, but I defy anyone to wrest from me this independent life which I have given myself in the ages and in the heavens.

"I was, by myself alone, your committee of dream and of disdain."

*May 13*

Interior Justice, Maeterlinck's great principle of atonement, is wrong only in wanting to be a doctrine, that is to say propagated.

He, he can suffer everything. Superiority alone consoles, and the disciples he seeks can only reply to him: "And I too, were I Alexander."

But wisdom spoils him. He harks back too much to the old "contentment." With regard to the past, he has stratagems, hypocrisies, resignations. How much trouble he takes to be happy! Is it that he, so spiritual, believes himself less restless than those ambitious beings whom he disapproves? He is, perhaps, a man superior to his happpiness, who seeks excuses for his satisfaction.

No, no I do not want to be more resigned to the past than to the present. I "do not envy anyone's past," but I envy myself in such or such a past—Saint-Just's or Marie Antoinette's, for example. At 27 I, too, should have purchased the Convention, the Committee of Public Safety and the missions from Thermidor.

And when you were Madam the Archduchess at Schoenbrün, and Madam the Dauphine at Trianon, and even Queen of France at the Tuileries and at the Logographe, you can afford to die beneath the nose of the most privileged *tricoteuses*.

Mirabeau said: "I like to believe she would

not wish life without her crown." Why should you ask of me more moderate aspirations? In that case there would be a difference, and a deeply moral difference, between an Austrian archduchess and me.

*June 3*

Is Robert de Sizeranne, whom I like so much, right in his article on women's portraits, when he so rationally sacrifices likeness to life? Would not that tend to an academic convention? Is not the important thing, even for art, less to make a "living" picture, than to see the reality and to render it, *not another?*

You want to make an oak lifelike, a light lifelike, then why not also this woman? You say there are photographs. It is, indeed, the sole beauty of photography that it renders sometimes —not always —the whole character of a face, and then we cry: How living it is!

The matter employed, it is true, is not beautiful, and I prefer the fine pastel which gives the likeness. I do not need to have seen Mlle. Fel to be assured that her portrait[1] looks like her.

Having neither music, nor love, nor sport, I fall back sometimes on the needle. When I am black with printing, I relish it, almost. Oh! it is not that it makes me think! but, at least, I substitute nobody's thoughts for my own.

[1] By Quentin de La Tour, at the Louvre. Tr.

Mme. V . . . has a way of paying extreme compliments: You look better than anybody else.

*Trez-Hir, August 7, 1902*

I take possession instinctively, if only for one hour of imponderable coquetry, of all that counts, of all that excels. I take whatever pleases me, whatever is best in a country or in a man. But I am incapable of jealousy.

When they speak to me of jealousy, I say that I do not understand, that it is not a matter of being sure of others, but of one's self. That we must be capable of inspiring a sentiment so unique that it can never be duplicated. It is in myself that I would seek my causes of disquiet; if not, what matter inferior rivals? What memory can they leave compared with yours? I would worry little about being the only love, but the finest love. Be unreplaceable, and let yourself replace.

When I arrive here, on the edge of this great beach of sand, of this great beach of sky, and of this great beach of water, I have always a shock of . . . cleanliness, of luxurious tidiness, an impression which snow alone also gives.

*To Mme. D . . . August 11*

But is it our fault if we can develop ourselves only to the benefit of analysis? If every time we want a perfection we first have to deal with the critical sense? And, since all our lives we should be

the defenders of intelligence, we would have the right to be shown on the opposite side the efforts and the progress made by the greatest consciousness.

I remember Mme. D . . .'s saying to me: For the moment my enthusiasm is out of commission.

Certainly an organic disease would have been better for me. Perhaps it would have wrecked me more, but it would have left life intact about me.

What is the good of discussing it? It will not give me a greater interest in myself, but I want passionately to save the woman. I want to wish for more than I desire. Fever alone is good.

*September 1st*

For myself I am an absentee. It requires an effort for me to remember myself. I now perceive that that which attaches us to life, makes us inhabit our bodies, balances us in space and in time, makes us breathe our consciousness in present things, is the sensation of luxury. That is to say that the conversational senses, as Malebranche defines them, are insufficient. It is the vision of luxury, the broad, deep view which instals us in life, in ourselves. I recognize myself in the hardness of a silhouette, in the purity of a coast-line. And each amelioration of my eyes make me remember sounds. These seem to me brought closer with movements, the better apprehended habits of the whispering world -the fact tense, vibrant, open to the circulation of the sonorous waves.

*September 6*

Yesterday, near the sleeping sea, with a long dream of white clouds at the bottom of my soul, I read Rosebery on Napoleon. How simple-minded these statesmen are when they deal with the other world! . . .

*September 10*

I would sell my soul for yachting, and believe it a good bargain! One must be entirely without inner life not to remain mortally homesick for a day on the bridge in the white canvas hammocks, wind-blown to the point of intoxication, in the rush, at eleven forced knots, of a long swell, amid the purity of white things, the tents, the suspended whaleboats, the gaunt rigging and the sea more yours than is ever a road. For it is an impression of *intimacy*, of seclusion, that one feels in mid-ocean. It is, in sum, in point of distances, the minimum of horizon, just as on the plain. Mountains alone lift up the sky for us. But there is life in the mountains, whereas the sea is without humanity. One can look around and say with certainty: "I am alone here, alone with the voyage, the winds' gaiety."

Speaking of friendship among friends is a want of taste, of tact even. We must avoid learning that we have betrayed ourselves more than you asked. We must never specify what we give and we must be *jealous of our future*, something totally ignored

by men. They have the heedlessness of constancy and this is very much less noble than is generally believed. I do not want to be loved *habitually*. Tomorrow I want to seduce again and want to be seduced. Remembering is pitying. Love is beautiful when it is a strife, the adversaries being of equal strength.

*September 26*

The remarkable and anti-revolutionary thing about Saint-Just is his bearing. It is a fine thing to have one's brow as severe as one's thought, one's look as hard as one's courage, one's mouth as fastidious as one's dream, and as secret as the solitude of one's soul.

*September 30*

I write only in the sincerity of boredom, that is to say the most distinterested, the least vain there is, which does not prevent me, however, as I read over what I have written, from having the impression of a series of idle disgressions.

I do not succeed in writing my life. It does not interest me. Certain days, like this morning, I awake in an astonishingly gentle mood which has almost the authority acquired by a life of asceticism and of high prayer, a gentleness of departure or of death. These are the days of the completest coldness and of the most scandalous indifference.

My life? Reading Spinoza, that is to say the greatest interest men's books have been capable of

preparing for me, so interminable a raillery at the bottom of my consciousness: Ah, yes, Marie, has the gift of prophecy indeed been accorded to the other nations, or simply to the Hebrews? Then, like a person of decision, I show a bold front, I weigh the for and the against, and the evidence of this conclusion is incontestable: Oh! my dear child, considering the little your present life is worth, you can well afford to spoil it and spend it in insensate sublimities, in fatiguing beauties, in useless superiorities. I defy you to lose anything in so doing!

*October 5*

"When injustice, developing our faculties, has not too soured them, we find ourselves more at our ease with hardy thoughts, with high sentiments, with the embarrassments of life. A vague, restless hope exalted my spirit: I tortured it ceaselessly."

Thus, at the origin of the great careers based upon ambition, there is always something, childhood or youth, to avenge. "The idea of greatness and of prosperity, without jealousy and without rivalry, is too abstract an idea and man's ordinary thought can not measure it."

And from M. de Lafayette: "In his desire, in his means of winning distinction, there was something acquired."

I love everything about Talleyrand. I must write of him. Speaking of his mother, all of whose charm of mind had been for her friends: "She had

no other wish than to please and to lose what she said." Nothing better. But we no longer have enough to lose with.

*To R. de M . . . October 8*

Why should you not take up music seriously? You are intelligent enough to understand it intellectually. This is what lacks in most women, incapable of loving music as a form of reading, of having musical curiosities and, consequently, of becoming musicians inwardly. You would be able, I hope, to see in a Bach fugue something besides a parlor monologue, or a bit of tapestry. . . .

*October 13*

Just as, until lately, I was so ashamed of the commonplace that I thought twice before saying "good day," or God bless you, so now, in writing, I guard and reserve myself: I work to become hackneyed, I enshrine myself in trite expressions.

And not in the least through spite or disdain, but through refinement. This is how it happened: a word from Mme. X . . . refusing an invitation—ten lines, relations not at all intimate, with the sprightly effect of wit one wants to produce—had displeased me. Impeccable formulas of politeness would have told me much more as to the lady's quality. It is miserable to ply one's trade of wit on every demand. We should despise small profits. Ah, the grandiose and delicious *bon ton* invented by

the aristocrats . . . how much wit had to be expended on it!

Authenticity is the only picturesqueness.

To know how to surround one's self with present things.

*October 16*

I have passed three-quarters of an hour in the garret, having found in the fire-proof box papers which I could not leave. The correspondence of the "French consul at the Canaries, Ste. Croix de Ténériffe, Baron Chassériau" who watched by my father's death-bed. It is on great folio sheets, gilt-edged.

My father did not know he was dying, he said. Strange! After "a long confession, having spoken of objects to be delivered to Marie"[1] and looked at my portrait as a tiny one year old girl! Why deprive dying men of heroism, on the pretext of solacing us?

"A gastralgia of the bowels," no fever, but exhaustion and that with a promptness which disconcerted the six surgeons of "La Loire" and the three doctors of Ste. Croix. But to die thus . . . so young, with such a future, among those Spaniards, when all the French had gone! I shall always rebel at the thought of this death.

His comrades, Fournier, Courejolles, are today chiefs. The death of young men is more terrible than that of young women. They lose so much more!

[1] Madame Lenéru, whose name it is also.

Who is the consul who sits up by him and who mourns him without even knowing him enough to know that he is married? M. Chassériau continued to write to Mama—a widow at 21—long letters, and we have portraits of all his family. A non-commissioned officer also did not leave his side—Adrien Harrison—and the man-nurse was perfect. "He was admirably taken care of, you may be sure of that, M. l'Amiral. This poor young man was so liked by all who came in contact with him."

Really the Spaniards were perfect. Governor Ximénès de Sandoval wrote a touching letter to my grand-father, and sent him the *Epoca*, the best paper of Madrid, in which he had inserted a note expressing regrets for the French officer.

And then all the lugubrious negotiations: The priests of Ténériffe would not let him be buried. "Everything happened as in the time of Philippe V," wrote the Consul, "and the removal was without precedent since 1806." It was first necessary to see the bishop, after which the civil authorities held a meeting and they could do nothing. Then a decree from Madrid which got as far as the royal signature; and, that not being enough, a royal order finally —*manu propria mando*. The coffin waited a long time in the cellar of a Spanish grandee, the nobles alone having private tombs in the cemetery of Ténériffe.

Ténériffe! This is what I find in my father's journal as a midshipman, post-marked: "Guerrière":

"Arrived today about noon at Ténériffe. . . . Here I have closed my copy-book, the band practising the chorus of *Roland* forward of the Montjoye and Charlemagne battery!

Roncevaux, vallon sombre,
Prête ton ombre
A leurs tombeaux.

"In any case I have not left Spanish territory. Here, as in the celebrated valley, the yellow flag with red stripes is unfurled."

*October 18*

How important it is always to write! What should I have of my father without his midshipman's diary? Well! his diary is charming. I, who should have felt robbed and perhaps so estranged had I not found it sufficiently intelligent, am charmed, attracted and heart-broken.

One always remains somewhat a stranger to one's self when one has not known one's father.

How likable he was and what sprightly originality beneath this purity of language characteristic of a little Parisian, which disconcerts me a trifle.

First the sailor makes his notes: "About ten o'clock the winds have jumped to N. W. It is the usual shift. We are headed S. W. with the main topsail close-reefed, making two knots. Why not make sail? This is explicable when you consider that, since the sea is still very heavy, a high speed would strain the ship. It is some sort of reason

anyhow. Another question; the reckoning is posted nowhere, although it is nearly 3 o'clock. Why?"

After a difficult manoeuvre:

"To go out beyond a standing-jib-boom at sea, and with such a sea, had seemed to me, until now, a very difficult operation. I still think so, but when I have a chance I shall try it. I have omitted to speak of a second-mate, Hervé, as one of those employed to unfurl the jibs. It will be a recommendation for him if I reread this."

Now he is the snob writing comfortably in the office of the "detail," and possessing a pad-lock for his "bazaar," this last luxury having been given him by his quarter-master-sergeant. "No one has any idea of the disorder and dirt which prevails in the quarters. . . . Every instant you hear noises of broken bottles, toppling piles of plates. It is a pile of rubbish on a layer of filth—a refuse heap. A very characteristic expression has been invented to indicate the assortment, nameless until now, which covers the deck. I shall not say it, but it is in Balzac."

Likewise we understand his taste for English housekeeping[1] after a stay at the British Hotel, Simonstown. "What a good thing elegant English life must be. And how high an opinion we should have of a people so well served!"

I am struck by how little the descriptions are such in the literary sense, but merely memory

[1] Word in English. Tr.

records; how, already, at 18, the sincere taste for sensation has replaced the poetic superstition. During the celebration of the crossing of the Line: "The night was magnificent. Leaning on the bridge, I had two spectacles before me: The crowd beside the desert, tumult beside silence. Tired of the noise, I tried to escape from it in contemplation of the silent scene." And then a storm: "Sheltered beneath the front of the poop, with nothing before my eyes but a black and lifeless mass, I suddenly saw the darkness liven. A vivid rosy gleam lighted the horizon and, on the leaden gray background of the sky, stood out boldly the thousand ropes of the two forward masts. In their labyrinths the topmen were distinctly seen working to make all ready to unrig the top-sail yards. Then, between the eye and the masts, a veritable sheet of writhing water, whipped by the wind, so thick that the gleam of the lightning could alone render it diaphanous."

In literature he likes those who can "raise a detail to the height of a fact." Did he read that somewhere?

The navy, in 1866, was more aristocratic than it is today. There were on board the "Guerrière" a Chabannes, a Turenne, a Borghese, and, in the fort of La Montagne, in Japan, a Mortemart. The truth is that analogies between the navy and the army are null. Naval officers are, in the first place, explorers with a strong tincture of mathematics and geography, accompanied, it is true, by a first

class equipment which they know how to use. But, if they have a taste for rapid-firing guns and a general predilection for torpedoes, it is, in sum, as artists, as scholars, as collectors proud of their gallery.

And, above all, they are diplomats and almost plenipotentiaries—less and less, unhappily; but, on a cruise, they are still an embassy. They receive sovereigns and are received by them. They have that charm of diplomatic life, that picturesqueness of courts and upper spheres, international relations.

*November 1st*

I bought *Travail* in the station at Rennes. It is *Germinal*, and I am glad to read it again. In sum, Zola is always the same book, the same description, the same sensation. It is impossible to think less than this man has thought. This great exponent of activity has even lived very little. Moreover, he ignores erudition. There has been, in his case no exchange between peers. And he reasons like a vulgarian. When you have read anything else, you are exasperated by so loud a voice for breaks in logic. He would turn you from social questions by describing a quarrel at dinner or in a village café. I was more of an anarchist when I read *The Enemy of the Law*.

And always these problems of victuals. Again the pheasants and truffles of the dinner in *Germinal*.

I need to forget that these things are envied.

Then, *mon Dieu*, speak of justice (and still I think there is more justness in the word pity) and turn things completely upside down; but don't mix felicity up in it, or imagine you are handling the question of happiness! It is a sentiment of high decorum which makes me welcome socialism, the abomination of meeting a vagabond who eats a bit of bread when you are dining out. It is absolutely heart-rending, but it does not shock my moral sense as unjust.

*Rue Faraday, November 9*

Purposely I do not undertake any slow piece of work. I avoid anchoring myself for an hour, but I do everything over again. I feel life starting up once more around me, with a quiver as about a boat which is being refloated.

I am serious and assiduous. I clench my teeth—almost my fists. I do not tire. To relax, on the contrary, would seem morbid to me. I have so monstruously much to do! I never cease to calculate with death.

I refuse consolations, *I want to have lost nothing.* That is to say, vengenance ought to outweigh disproportionately the damage done. Is it possible? No matter, it will be so only in the measure in which it is attempted.

The quality of my attention is poor. There is mastery to be gained there. Style, with the pitched battle perhaps, is the most admirable training for the attention.

Writing, learning to choose, to deliberate, teaches the motived decision, teaches an infinity in the shadings and imponderabilities of touch, teaches to coordinate, to want and to achieve order, teaches curiosity, that is to say desire and direction, that is to say will.

Writing teaches *to grasp.*

I need a style not at all literary. I need to write in order to live and to make a success of my life, even though I should print nothing. In short, writing, which is the deepest way of thinking, is equally that of living.

Writing is prayer. To realize by style the fifty inward years of Saint Theresa.

*November 15*

I arranged my music this morning. Beethoven, Mozart, Schumann, the Echos of Germany, and so on to my studies by Stephen Heller. If I were cured at thirty, I have calculated, I should still have time to know everything and play everything. Besides, some day perhaps, when I am older, I shall learn to read music.

*Sunday, November 23*

What twaddle *Travail* is, every inch an old man's book. Does this vulgar felicity, Sunday and holiday happiness, tempt the people more than it tempts me? When Zola executes his dream of transmuting the sumptuous solitude of a private

park into an asylum yard for brats and housewives in childbirth, we utter the most disinterested cry of despair!

And always, always this *public happiness*, this public love. It would nauseate us with the people, if we were not after all a Christian nation. Parks are made for chatelaines and poachers, and fine forests are less sullied by the passing of charcoal-burners than by family luncheons.

*Tuesday 25*

In order to enveigle at once all my habits, it is better to begin badly, *in a hurry*,[1] than to put off, even for a day. For the evil is not lost time, but lost impulse.

To train one's self so marvellously for immediate action, that one arrives at the reflex of a perpetual and perfect readiness.

To invent new habits as easily as the fancy takes us.

O fancies, lost graces!

Then *schnell, schneller, der Tod reitet so schnell!*

Everything should occur more and more quickly, from the material act to the cerebral movement. For everything is more cleancut which is accomplished rapidly and as a whole.

Rule: practice fixing dates.

*November 30*

Again the women at the sale at the Grand Palais. Even at 50 or 60 they do not look serious.

[1] In English. Tr.

*December 4*

We recalled with Mama that Good Friday concert, Gounod's *Redemption* sung by Faure and Maury, at the Albert-le-Grand. I remembered better than she. Splendid women's voices, passionate and clear, singing "Au pied de la Croix Sainte" and "Jésus est ressuscité," led by Gounod in an adorable movement, the rhythm of a morning run.

*December 6*

Returning to Paris one should rush to the Rue des Tuileries and the quays, to breathe the historic air. Capitals give us the need for glorious architecture. The Place de la Concorde and the Pont Alexandre enchant me like a forest, a coast-line. Ah! cities, cities which are persons hundreds of year old, cities older and nobler than the country, cities with fine names, throned over all the earth. . . .

At Paris, when I have not seen the Seine and the bridges, or that adorable Carrousel where the Kings of France installed sky, clouds and the colour of the weather in their home, in their court, —there are days when, from the Pavillon de Marsan, the Pavillon de Flore is seen in the blue air—it seems to me, as at Trez-Hir, when I have not visited the beach, that I have not been out of doors.

*Sunday 13*

A letter from Marie raising the question of marriage. She is irritated because they are not willing

to let her alone. She says to me that marriage is certainly a normal vocation, but that celibacy ought to be one too, and that, until now, Catholicism alone has been able to organize it. "If you do not marry, will your mother, as a matter of principle, be as disappointed as mine?"

With me, Marie, it is different. I was not marriageable. If I became so, the day, for example, when I read lips easily, I should, I believe, want to marry. Even eliminating the beautiful marriage of inclination, there would still be the marriage of ambition and, lacking that, the marriage of devotion. In any case, I believe it would be well to make all the concessions I could bring myself to. I should not want to die unmarried.

Celibacy cannot be a system, cannot be a preference, *because it is nothing more.* Save, evidently, in exceptional circumstances of fortune or of personality; because then liberty ceases to be a vain word, and the woman can enjoy the agreeable things of this world on her own initiative. But then one is unpardonable, morally and physically, for not having encountered a tempting marriage.

Doctors, I believe, divide ailments into two species: plethoras and insufficiencies. Well! celibacy is an insufficiency. One must never lag behind. A young girl, an eternal young girl—will never run the risk of dying in child-birth, of losing a son of 20, of remaining a widow at 30, advantages which are expressed only by negations and which I shall not

vaunt—I who have always said, and who have always written, that we are less poor through what we lose, than through what we have missed, and less thwarted by what we have no longer, than by what we shall never have. Celibacy is bearable because, in the last analysis, everything in the world is; but it is, like death, a great melancholy, and as sombre for man as for woman.

It is inadmissible to speak of cloisters as schools of celibacy. They are a school of virginity, but with spiritual bridals and the intensest obsession of union. But this word "love," which shocks us a little in the mouth of mystics, is not a metaphor. Nuns are as completely spouses as it is possible for souls to be.

But, if I remark an impatience, an agony, at growing old—if, even when I work hardest, I have a sensation of the "in vain;" if work, the artistic effort of others with which I was first enchanted, becomes covered with ridicule and stirs deeply within me the inextinguishable laughter of vanity; if, in my struggle with death, incredibly rich in stratagems, I feel that it is getting the better of me . . . then the reason is that I am in the wrong, that all the resources are not mine, that my life passes, and that soon it will have passed without them.

I have always had an inexorably clear judgment, and a notion of the end singularly precise and detached of whatever is means.

I do not admit the vicious circle and I shall not

give the name of *end* to a chance point of the lost line. Now, I have never, in all my days, felt anything but the fever of passing and the exclusive taste for asceticism. I demand the sensation of the *arrival.* I shall not, through so many obstacles, have increased so prodigiously my "will to live" for the sake of going and finishing in a remote region of old age. I shall not, with materials of destiny which it is permitted me to call exceptional, have created in myself, by force of intensity, an exceptional soul, for the histrionic satisfaction of an aesthetic enjoyment.

They give the impression of a thing rare among women, even from 60 to 70, *of seriousness.* To contrive it, one must have a dose of simplicity which demands too much intelligence, and to impose it upon the ambient childishness requires an imperturbability which is a question of character.

To Mme. D. . . . This documentation weighs horribly upon me. *One has to perform useless work.* One has to read what will be of no use. This keeps me from being indulgent for the names and the styles of the unknown. Ordinary man is a ridiculous thing.

## 1903

*January 5*

I enjoyed myself, God forgive me, at "Théroigne!" [1] To see those big fellows of actors coming

[1] *Théroigne de Méricourt* by Paul Hervieu. Tr.

and going, Sieyès's cane and Péthion's gloves. . . . These are things which will never again be for me what they are for others. It is not a matter merely of the "historic thrill," though I am subject to it to such an extent that Molière—and in *Le Médecin malgré lui!*—came near making me cry in the front of a box. It is the thrill of life, and felt, not as an artist, not as an aesthete, but as one who is *dead!* I bring to the world emotions of a person restored to life.

De Quincey, referring to his nightmares, spoke of the throngs which obsessed him, of the "tyranny of the human face." Now the face, the human visage, has been lacking for me in precisely the measure in which it pursued him. I loved them all yesterday, men and women, because they were breathing and willing flesh, because they were beasts.

I believe I love human life, that I am curious concerning it, as if I were of another race.

The act in the Château made me understand another fascination of the Court. All these beasts, chosen, varied, specialized, labelled, at the disposal of sovereigns. . . . There would be a tactile pleasure in handling them, as in touching fine chessmen.

Generals have known this: the being who can be handled and sacrificed. It creates a new relation of eye to eye, something rarer, more poignant, perhaps, than love.

Napoleon will remain the man who has possessed

the truest part of human voluptuousness. All those men whom he had . . . I am not speaking of the people whom he was unable to feel, but of those whom he *saw*, whom he remembered. Any discussion as to that is merely a revenge of the humbled. I have never approached a crowd without immediately sensing what must be, not the pride, but the *sensuality* of power. Ah! no one could feel more gravely than I the emotion of vanities.

We should beware; there is among us too much reflex asceticism, there are too many who are mortified without knowing it. We keep the disgusts of Christianity, but we have abolished its thirsts. "Be souls of desire," at least said Saint Theresa.

All complete avidity shocks us, and we believe we have gained something when we have given ourselves a disgust. Under penalty of impotence, non-appetite should be a satiety.

*January 7*

With all my strength I struggle against this superstition: age. What relation between the rotations, the revolutions of Earth and our activity?

My maturity was from 15 to 30. My youth will come afterwards, and we will see what ten, fifteen years less can do against me.

*January 10*

*Natura non facit saltus.*

If we had imagination for *passing*, a memory for

transitions, if we could grasp the continuity of movement, we should see how little anything foreign can befall us, and how we are already where we have to go. Without the external marks to measure by, every elevation would seem so normal, that it would not even give us the sense of displacement. And we have respect for the impossible!

*January 13*

A play is bad, ridiculous, ill-made, but *it is a play.* Your *but* is a fool! I do not admit this argument, even for a fairy spectacle. A play is a play, even when it is read, and good stage-craft remains good stage-craft even when I read, for example, *Bataille de Dames.* But if I complain of X . . . if I do not find a scene to cling to, if this useless dust of dialogue tires me to death, do not answer: "He is a practical playwright."

Why, indeed? I read in five minutes a miserable dialogue which it takes twenty to have done with on the stage.

The evidence goes to show that what is bad when read becomes detestable in the theatre, for the very simple reason that it is better to whisper a stupidity than to shout it. Unreadable plays succeed in the theatre. But unreadable novels succeed also. Why don't you cry: It is bad, but it is a novel! I assert my right to maintain taste in the theatre. So much the worse for the public which likes stage clap-trap, dramatized novels.

So much the worse for those who don't know how to read with their ears. Thomas Corneille was no more of a "practical playwright" than Racine, although his *Timocrate* enjoyed the greatest success of the century.

*January 21*

To do what I do joylessly, without enthusiasm, without presence of mind or *while thinking of something else.*

Were I a trifle more stupid, my subject would take hold of me. I shall never know that happiness. When I leave my table, nothing in the world could make me think of the work I have in hand. It is an instinctive and almost childish flight. I run after success as I would hunt for my handkerchief. At bottom, I have not an abstract nature.

Those people who are deeply touched when you admit you are wrong, and those who yield wittily in a discussion, will never know, either of them, that one is never wrong, for there is always a reason why one does what one does. To slip out by means of concessions is, then, a very useful way of classifying a misunderstanding, but by rendering it a hundred times deeper through sacrificing not only all its chances of being cleared up, but also the rights of others not to be duped. God preserve me from the insolence of him who yields to me.

I announced: I would rather be deceived as to my husband's fidelity than as to his faculties and

his intrinsic worth. Fernande was marvellously of my opinion. Mama said: "You are disgusting!"

*February 13*

I have again had to defend ambition. How skilfully men have been able to arrange—at least in public opinion—so as not to suffer because of their baseness! I got irritated: activity alone is beautiful. Every passion which makes men render more than they are in the habit of giving, is an exalting passion and consequently noble.

There got into the subway an admirable man, wearing the livery of a man of fashion, without any of his attitudes, and with a heavy portfolio in his gray-gloved hands. I exhausted my ingenuity in suppositions. A minister, or some one such, would not travel in a public conveyance. An actor? (Palais Royal station.) He had moustaches, and then his face. An author coming from the rehearsal of his play? A lecturer? They would be in a carriage, and not alone. I lean rather towards the author, for the expression was that of an intellectual in a state of inward emotion. That absorbed, violent, clear look, as insolent as a child's, has conquered all women. I incline to believe he was thinking of something else; but he had that air of being on the edge of speech expected like a slap in the face—an insult offered by pursuer or preacher. Women seem to enjoy therein voluptuous contempt of themselves. Are they not

strange, the passers-by? What is found and what is lost. . . .

Shall we ever know all that the silhouette of someone unknown, who goes away for ever, has taken from us? The words and looks which might be harvested from those souls whose eyes have, for a quarter of an hour, loved ours, whereas each turns away to die in his closed destiny, impenetrable to those whom chance has not reserved for us, whom life will not name to us.

And there are still others—those whose very faces were refused us, those who turn the corner of a street which we take, who have left the drawing-room which we enter, the city where we arrive, the apartment which we rent, the family where we were going; those whom a minute, a step, a grain of sand has perseveringly turned from our ways . . . the incessant activity of crossing destinies, the thread which, this evening, has tightened this knot, woofs which enchain, draw out, advance and divide . . . those whom we saw only at night; those of whom we saw but the back, insignificent fatalities, atomic epitomes of Destiny—all the will of the world which has ordered that!

In the subway, on the railway, I often see people, who if they do not sleep, at least close their eyes and present their physiognomy as in slumber. I have seen a charming woman who, changing nothing in her correct attitude, sitting perfectly straight, slept on her stem like a flower, her eyes

closed as when lowered, haughty as when awake, without a flicker of her features. But usually they are ignoble. It is a cowardice, an abandonment. Such beings must suffer with a seasick countenance, and carry it with them unto death. Thank God, this is a shame reserved for apes. Nature has granted real grief a worthier and simpler visage, in giving it rigidity.

What a strange test this spectacle of slumber is in marriage. It is the greatest abandonment, the greatest possession. I picture, on the face of the one who watches, the look and the alertness of a traitor.

*Sunday 22*

Always my eyes and the return of things. It is so novel to absorb more sun, for example; to walk in the air, in the free light, to see the *true* daylight, other people's daylight, without the infamous blue glasses which have condemned my young girl's eyes.

Shall I soon recover my childish look, that devouring look for which everyone loved me? There were perhaps prettier ones; but I felt myself, physically, the favorite. Ah! all that I have lost! I feel doltish before the shards of too many broken things—with a little ironic triumph, however, as if I had the right to be proud of a colossal clumsiness.

*March 2*

I have reread the reign of Tiberius in Tacitus, and taken up Machiavelli once more. If, after that,

I cannot be entrusted with an empire! A delicious thing in Machiavelli, who speaks only of state affairs and crimes, is his use of thee and thou in addressing the reader: "And thou wilt not maintain thyself if thou dost this, and thou goest to thy ruin if thou dost not combine the person of the fox with the person of the lion.

*Ed era duca tanta ferocia et tanta virtu. . . .*

Tacitus says also: *Pollionisque asinii patris ferociam retineret.* I love this Roman *ferocia.* It is translated by haughtiness, indomitability, force.

In Latin, ferocity is a virtue. At its root, the thing and the word are admirable, so true is it that men are made to be eaten.

*March 5*

I am edified when, at the Bibliothèque Nationale, I raise my eyes—fairly often, for drudging is always anti-natural for me. It teaches me to examine men in the frankness, in the cynicism, of work!

Although masters of their efforts, they become embarrassed and congested. Work evidently makes them heavy. It is one sort of digestion with the symptoms of the other. Are all the sovereign things written thus?

And the men in the subway at 9 o'clock, and at noon—these well-dressed gentlemen—yes, even the one who offers me his seat. . . . It is easy to foresee the events which would "tatter" their souls like rags, the words which would make their

vanity weep. How many places to take among men!

We shall reread indefinitely in novels these outcries of the young against life—of illegitimate children among others—when they want to commit suicide: that they did not ask to be born, and not only of their parents, but of each ancestor who, from the beginning of the world, prepared them. For, without the generations which were to come, without the "will to live" of their future race, no one would have known the human ill, and no one has the right to ignore this most absolute of communities, no one can withdraw to recriminate and condemn, and every one is guilty in this respect, even the president's bell!

*March 14*

We are not in such a state of intellectual minority that, confronted with an idea, we ought always to enquire as to its author. A thought is more interesting through its relations with truth, through its absolute value, than through its value relative to an individual. I can despise death because of a saying of Seneca who did not despise it. The fact that Schopenhauer was a high-liver is essentially foreign to the philosophic significance of pessimism.

But these big people need an example.

They are like children at the theatre who ask if "it really happened," and who would take no further interest in the play if they knew that the actor was not expressing his own thoughts.

*March 18*

To restrain the people who discourage you. Oh! as passively as possible, "because they are afraid of giving you illusions." How right I have been to raise all the emergency bridges between myself and the others!

I am convinced in my heart of hearts that I shall never do anything except by myself, my *onliest self.*

When you have to maintain a rather high inward level, all—even those who love you—are bad company for you. It is an absolute rule of moral dignity. We have no more to talk to others of our ambitions than of our love-affairs.

It is the experience of Saint Theresa who, surely, did not encounter hostilities. "I had only too many friends to aid me to fall; but, to pick myself up again, I found myself in a terrifying solitude."

By falling, she meant falling into indifference with regard to the high graces. Speak to them of themselves, speak to them of themselves always—there you have enough to fill the social relations of your whole life.

Have I not then been sufficiently predestinate to silence, that I must still preach against it? Ah! Saint-Just, who so quickly taught us all the secrets of inward power!

*26*

There is nothing which snatches us more abruptly from all fellowship than discussing unhappiness

with our fellows or, in general, all that we share profoundly with them: religion, death, love.

"What courage it must take!"

I answer: "Not at all. Courage or no courage has nothing to do with necessity. It takes only space and time."

"Yes, all the same, courage to live."

"All that we suffer is piecemeal death. We have no reason to prefer the whole when we do not like the parts.

I do not know where I get this liturgical soul. I have all the instincts of monastic life, including the obsession of commemorations. How many times people have resented my loving to speak of the dead as if they were living.

Men are not so religious as they believe, unless we understand, by religion, fear of the Jupiter who thunders, and respect for the Jupiter who decrees.

Moments when I must choke. I miss the human voice, that bond more firm, more cordial than a look. Portraits also look, the dead look. I am surrounded by dead men whom it is hard for me to remember . . . the effort involved in every relation with the world . . . and that it should always be thus, over and over, with interdiction of escape, were I to live a hundred years among them!

*March 29*

I no longer want to express my opinion as to people's intelligence, so as not to profane what I

mean by it. I mean by intelligence, and more instinctively than by deliberate criticism, that which makes an individual capable of everything and, first of all, of never being stupid. Capable of everything does not imply the varied accomplishments of a Renaissance Italian, any more than it does Bonapartizing in one's century; but capable of existing at every point and giving proofs of it by an impeccable originality of criticism.

Beauty. We were speaking of it yesterday with A. . . . with regard to a young girl whom I had noticed at the Salon. Medal-like features, but with a dazzling freshness and fulness of flesh. Seated, and, at a distance, the soul unperceived in her eyes, she was imperial. Moving and walking, the swan, as usual, turned into a goose. She was no long anything but a little shop-girl whose head waggled at every step. And always, when they are only beautiful, there is a blemish which annihilates them. Ah! the spiritual is well-avenged.

We also meet very good-looking young men and we feel sure that, in every circumstance, we should dominate them, because they have not the spark, that glamour on beauty from within, which alone makes something of it.

These exceptionally beautiful women are the very ones who are abandoned by their husbands for the most disgusting mistresses.

This means that there are beauties—most beauties—without value for arousing passion, and that spells must be sought elsewhere.

*Good Thursday*

Bossuet to Sister C. . . . Instructions for Holy Week, Psalm LXXXVIII "Free among the dead." They have wanted me among the stricken and miserable, but I am not of their company. Contagion will teach me neither their attitude nor their tongue.

I am alien in unhappiness. I am a strayed traveller. I am here by error, and what it if pleases me to suppose it is to please myself!

When you are a little interested in the question, you do not forgive others the disgusting way in which they suffer. Oh! the heart-sick mouth, the letter-box mouth, and that air of shuffling eternal slippers. I warrant you, whatever there has been, whatever there may still be in it, this life will head yours by all the height of the heavens. I was born without pride and I have devoted the time needed to learning it.

*Tuesday 14*

Since men first began to see each other, they have not yet learned how to look. They are always persuaded "that people must not be judged by appearances," which spares them the trouble of paying the least attention to these. There is no need even to interpret, to seek hidden meanings. Everything is visible, everything is open to the view. The prejudice against appearance is an error of Gnosticism. Malebranche himself was able to

react: "I have a body which seems to me to constitute more than half my being."

But, this being admitted, I do not believe in putting "spiritual discernment" within everybody's reach. The prophetic gift will be more than ever necessary; for *seeing is an exceptional thing and even more incommunicable than judging, or than analyzing.*

The heads of servants whom certain masters introduce into their households! and their average physiognomy in intimacy. . . .

Never, face to face with a man, shall I dream of asking information as to his character or even his intelligence, any more than I would of demanding the temperature when near the thermometer. The eye is the organ of the mind as specially as that of sight, and I see the brain in the eye, just as I measure its visual power. But who, then, is yet able to see sight?

Every minute I am asked: "Do you see that?" How can they confuse the look which sees and the look which does not see? I distinguish the degree of nearsightedness in people whom I see for the first time. It is so easy to detect the look which pretends to see!

*April 17*

My age is still the thing which I understand least. There is no doubt about it! I am young. There is no end to the wealth of youth which I find in myself!

And yet, the greatest anxiety lies precisely there. Sadness and boredom—admitted! But to be obliged to grow old through them. . . . Is this, then, why I have come? After all, what is courage? What good is it? What is this pose? Is one any the less dupe because of it—duped, caught, "robbed like a monkey who has been given an empty nut"?

I want to parade magnificently in my bankruptcy, since the one thing I have left is to do it well or ill.

Since I am given "a balcony whence to spit on this people" I want to go to work at it well from my height; but to deny that, at each instant of my life, I shall have had my heart wrung, sobs in my temples and my throat, would be stupid.

I expect so little joy from my comings and goings that all my movements seem stupid to me. In the street this goes so far as to stop locomotion. At the library, among all these men, I am not a woman; I am as tired and indifferent as if ugly or old. My one wish is to cling to the cape of an old priest and sob on his band.

They say to me: "Fortunately, you have known how to organize a life for yourself! Nobody in your place would have got out of it as you have." They call it a life! They call it getting out!

I do not regret, by name, such and such a happiness, and the days which make me afraid of "succumbing to the tenderness of regret." I have

only one nostalgia, but it is ferocious: I regret gaiety, *and for itself alone*. Not that which causes it, but the sweeping of animal spirits.

I look at young dogs with jealousy. The terrible thing is to become elegiac.

*June 7*

Twenty-eight years old. Let us say nothing more about it. I think of one thing only—of a little girl of thirteen whom I knew of old, and whose fate I shall never learn.

The magnificent thing is to keep my uncompromising attitude with regard to the superfluous, when I am so lacking in what is necessary. I have not yet reached the point where I can let myself slip into a commonplace happiness, but shall I be able to dispense with it always? Never anything, an obstacle, a screen between death and self. . . . Looking at myself in a glass, I am sometimes surprised still to find in myself a woman's hope.

And yet, I am not ready. I want to await happiness a while longer. I must prepare myself for life: ten years of happiness, and I shall prepare myself for death.

I came, like the Sybil, at an hour when I had the books of the future intact in my arms. I was refused the price, and three were thrown into the fire. For what remained I asked the same; and, refused again, three more were burned. It was for the last three books that the Sybil received the price she had expected for all.

*Grand Hôtel du Trez-Hir, August 6, 1903*

"You will come to it when you are my age." That is the hypothesis; but experience proves that, at my age, you were not I.

To Marie B. . . . I believe we should not be so resentful towards life, since, even so, it is from life alone that we borrow the idea of happiness which makes us so exacting. So much for the question of right, which I find generally neglected. At bottom, I am one of those who would ask nothing of life but itself.

Only, there is death. Am I more sincere or less lofty than you? But death is my reproach to life. Had we time to be patient, we might wait with all the pains and annoyances. Ah! if time stood still in suffering, if we did not grow old of it! You feel clearly that all would be changed. Then what is absurd? Being mortals who do not like to die. It is the sole frankly intolerable "contradiction." Then, don't indict life, when one is angry only at death. You believe that I am making game of you, and that I am calling the wolf to console you for the Bogyman; but you speak of "absurdity," and everything seems so logical to me!

As for the display of courage and energy, I find it a trifle acrobatic. Who, then, has been made happier by courage? Where does it change anything in the reality of the facts and the necessity of the sensations? It is elegant like all polite lies; but those who are enchanted by their courage and

believe, for that reason, that they have invented a solution, disgust me like the prig who smokes a cigarette during the operation.

Energy? If you mean by that an arrangement with one's ills, helping to bear them, I have not an atom of it; for I assure you that nothing—not even habit—has made matters easier for me.

Everything is horrible, and more and more so, there! I have never ceased saying it to myself and I feel no shame in saying it to others, that is to say, to you.

*August 10*

Madame B . . . fifty years old, was exquisite on the beach. Quite slender in the great iron arm-chair, grasping the arms with all the ardor of her enthusiasm, her delicate head held high on her proud neck, she sparkled with youth and the possession of life. In her smart costume of English alpaca, of the same oxidized silver as her curls floating free from her flat Pompadour head-dress, so tall in her seated posture, the wind seemed to circulate in her veins. I admired her and, wisely, like an adept, I garnered the tradition. I wonder if the young man lying, in the sand, at the foot of the arm-chair, his tan-gloved racquette in his white-gloved hands, guessed the superiority of this charm. At the age when one seeks his loves in society, it would have made me exacting.

When woman survives this age, as in the case of

the Empress of Austria, she assumes an air of freedom, a purity of outline outside of habitual considerations, a sombre and definitive distinctness, like something accomplished, destiny fulfilled, space empty about the dress and wide open on the reaches of death.

Already in Mme. L . . ., in the feverishness of her movements, the instability of her repose—she did not stay seated—I had felt this lack of occupation which marks the moment of departure, this clearing-out, this great ordering of events, and this readiness of old age. You felt her free and alone, impossible to follow, with, in her room, desert spaces about her, and precious as things measured.

I have instinctively this far look. These persisting lives widen my horizons. Fifty, sixty years appear plenitude to me, as if I had the intuition that my veritable life lies there.

Proud declines interest me more than ages too commonly loved, too much of an old story, the popular ages.

In *L'Illustration*, the admirable gesture of Cardinal Rampolla passionately offering his vote at the altar of the Sixtine, cancelling his pride as a tragic Sicilian and an impossible pope.

*August 20*

Ruysbroeck the Admirable, mysticism, theosophy, spiritism, etc. . . . for me a lecture by Lacordaire, one of Pascal's syllogisms, an exposition

of German, and even of English philosophy, open more inward horizons.

I find an irritating obtuseness in those who want to make mysticism out of nothing, when all things contain it in so authentic a manner. Do what they will, the ignorant possess no more than other people. It is not the ignorant who have discovered and demonstrated it. There have never been any but the scientists and the philosophers to construct a sound instrument of attack against science and philosophy.

*August 29*

"That the game is not worth the candle," and that their happiness costs them dear. So much the worse for the solid citizens who bargain and are incapable of superappreciating their pleasures.

One must be a great nobleman and pay a higher price for his desires than other people.

I feel that happiness, in my case, would be worth the stake I have placed on it.

*September 3*

For everybody silence is antipathetic. For me it has become, like idleness, a passion. I am never more unapproachable than when I am doing nothing, and people disturb me less when they interrupt my reading and my writing. Yesterday I wanted to cry: "But, if you continue to distract me, it is quite useless for me to do nothing!"

Besides, we should never show ourselves in repose. It is too intimate. As soon as you no longer have anything to do with others, withdraw. Presence, uselessly prolonged, is depressing. Even in the family, even in love, learn to disappear so as to maintain the fine vital tension of relations.

*September 5*

How many degrees in sadness! There are days when one would want, not to cry—there is no feeling—but to shriek all day long, every fifteen minutes, like madmen, in order to rid one's self of a heavy inward burden.

I was so fine an instrument of laughter, so perfect a machine for mirth, that to produce no longer throws me out of gear, disorganizes me more than it would another. I shall never forget all the gaiety I have not had!

*1903, Le Trez-Hir, Sept.*

Impossible to remake the writer: I hold on to nothing. I no longer find what may be suitable for myself and for others. Nor what would suit me alone either, as a matter of fact.

And I wish more than ever "to milk people." It is incredible how the millions become necessary to my inner life.

I have no taste, at bottom, for anything but life and death. To write lives: Saint-Just, Talleyrand, Vauvenargues, Saint Theresa.

Let her lead "a quiet leisurely life, with no distractions." They call that "peaceful days"!

Always goodness and intelligence. He said: "Those who are good always let themselves be eaten." I, very peremptory: "It is not because they are good, but because they are eatable!"

The light changes. It grows purer and already enters the house as in winter. It makes the day a long morning with hours favorable for the whole being, body and soul, as Malherbe meant when he said: "Morning alone is good." Sea and clouds are frosted with white, a polar white. It is a snow freshness, a glacial blue. Autumn alone is good.

Concerning the death's head which A.-D. de V . . . said be could look at, but not touch.

Touching, handling, embracing—anything you like; I am absolutely without disgust. I have changed with regard to spiders and caterpillars. I can feel horror for nothing which is or has been life. The touch of an insect gives me a sensual pleasure. I have experienced death to such a degree that every sensation will remain resurrection for me. Whatever I find nostalgic is dear to me as a souvenir. I have no instinctive repulsion except for odors; but that is the instinct of self-preservation.

We know things—that is, as beings foreign to us—only through danger. Recall what the country becomes like when you are profoundly tired from too long a journey. It is the traveller who precedes

us at a distance. For a long time we have been following it to catch up with it; for, seen from behind, we recognize it. Yet when, once overtaken, it has turned its head, the unknown aspect of its visage is so great, so sudden and so calm, that the look of a demon would seem less hostile and the wearing of a mask less disturbing.

People who are really lost, who have been hungry, cold and fearful in an ordinary landscape, side by side with the egotistical and daily routine of the vegetable world, and of the animals which they believed familiar—such people have really encountered things, the disdainful beings who offer no aid.

Shipwrecked sailors under the familiar moon and the stars, godchildren of men, must instinctively have the surprise, the experience of this abandonment by the beings, the things, which they have believed intimate because they had seen them every day. What soubriquets the human names of the stars must seem to them then! How they must feel the error, the disproportion of their familiarity, the betrayal of their confidence. . . . At these exceptional and maleficent moments, and not at all through our aesthetic and lyrical habits, we meet things, being to being, and we feel them.

The man who kills you and perhaps, even, the man who loves you, must thus assume a sudden character of truth, of *strangeness*.

What is open at Le Trez-Hir, seen from my bed, facing the window, with the Tas de Pois looming up

in the west—Druid stones surrounded by water, ruins of Atlantis—is indeed the wall of the continents. For me it is the great Western Gate, the one place in the world through which *you really go out*, through which *Le Français* left last week for the South Pole.

The *Journal des Goncourts*, to which I return periodically, and which is perhaps what I shall have loved best, with Flaubert's correspondence—this book made up uniquely of what I have lost in things and in men—the detail and the conversation—is cordial, warm and resonant with human speech. It shows the true aim, the aim which does not rob artistic celebrities, the comradeship among peers, the exchanges among equals, the understanding always expressible by a simple clasp of the hands. Even did Edmond and Jules de Goncourt pay for their friendship with Gautier and Gavarni by those ailments of heart and of liver to which they attributed their talent, literature showed itself a good gambler with regard to them.

A writer should quarry in Saint-Simon, and all the adorable XVIIth century, a piece of the *Vie Ancienne*, something like a fine authentic engraving, call it "Versailles," and treat it, without romanticism and without verbiage, in the grand manner of history and of the past. Finishing with the death of the Duc de Bourgogne wherein foundered the hope of a reign which was not of this world. The plot is quite sufficient, with this proudest of

princes, little loved by his wife, regretted by all other women, and unconsoled by God.

Saint-Simon's admirable regret: "I never saw him again. May it please the Divine Mercy for me to see him always where his goodness has no doubt placed him!"

*Paris, November 10*

When one has begun to write, one speaks too little. One grows unaccustomed to oral relations. In the first place, since one can be read, one attaches little importance to the indifferent attention of interlocutors. The habit of perfect expression creates disgust for approximations and leads to lazily sketching, in talk, what will be better said later on.

It is a fault. One should have one's soul with one and not on a writing-table, behind the great green cloth which Louis XIV threw over his secret work.

I repeat that the intelligence is judged by the eyes, that intelligence is seen very much more than it is heard. One does not always say transcendent things, but the capacity for saying them is always visible.

A kiss is a secret without words.

To M. B. . . . The great weakness of the unmoral, and their refutation, lies in their proselytism. As soon as one goes in for apostleship, in one direction or another, it becomes necessary to take a social point of view very different from that of the individual. I do not feel the slightest need for the

majority to think as I do. However, as I have little esteem for the revolutionary type, and for those who make a merit of their independence—as if that were not self-evident—I think that one should be on his guard against that great inutility—declared opposition—and the grossness of going to cry one's intimate sentiments upon the housetops, wanting, with all his might, "*to act as he thinks.*" One more famous prejudice!

There is serious dignity and indifference to the opinion of others only in the absolute with respect to one's self. I would believe, then, that I had done enough for social morality, and that I had done still more for my inward liberty, by sparing all scandal. Seriously, does this way of seeing make you very sick?

*December 8*

"Desire for solitude is better than solitude," and Saint Theresa was a good judge. Mme. de Maintenon also said: "In the world all the returns are to the convent. In the convent all the returns are to the world."

Let us have no illusions as to our needs and our aspirations. We have but one of each: the necessity of change.

Anyone who can travel, love, see and hear, and yet grows dull at home, debasing his eyes and his back by acting as scribe, is a boor ruined by the pedants, unless he be a poor beggar.

There are days where ink and books—all these pretences of living—seem to me an idol vainer and more odious—surely more false—than money. In a real life books can only be initiators.

What is there in us of ourselves? I begin to respect myself as a reliquary of all those whom I have known. A way, when I laugh, of piercing people through with a look, which is Aunt Alice's. Abrupt intonations—"Ah! my dear child," to persons of my own age—which are Mme. Lemonnier's, and which I love as a souvenir of her. It is Mme. de T . . . who has kept her way of listening, with the shade of a movement in her cheeks and in her nose, as if she were sucking a candy. A swift, sweeping blow, when I welcome people, my eyes lifted and smiling, which is Mme. Biacabe's and M. T. T . . .'s.

When someone is presented to us, a movement lifting the chin and straightening the shoulders, without its being possible to tell whether it is receiving or rendering homage, at once Mama's and Mme. de Lescure's, surprised by strangers—or, when bored, an absorbed, pompous, aggressive air which is almost a parody of itself, and which I have sometimes seen in Renée de M . . . without my knowing whether she owes it to me or I owe to her.

I love this permeability, this corporeal memory of what has pleased us. Because of it I am more precious to myself than were I entirely of my own invention.

"I have spoken to you of the tragic death of my old friend X. . . . I learn that things were even more serious, and that an assassination is no longer doubted. When, then, will men lose this illusion of settling their quarrels by death?

It only holds things in suspense, and perpetuates errors. I have never been able to regard death as a denouement. It forbids all denouements."

## 1904

*February 5*

For the past fifteen years I have begun to learn what our eyes are to us. Little by little, as the vizor is raised, all that is restored, including that which is not seen! This sentiment of separation which I had in looking at everything, from a tree to Mama. The ears, which separate souls, have perhaps taken less from me than the eyes which separate bodies and things.

I recapture images of life which will be able to last, and this prop of memories had so curiously disappeared. I have entirely lost three or four years of my life. It is no good protesting, losing my patience, seeking. I am like a child who does not know his lesson. On the other hand, that which came before is I for eternity.

"Happiness is an invention, like the system of weights and measures." (J. Laforgue.)

*February 20*

What a charming safeguard Mme. de Staël—Mlle. Delaunay—is for the honour of girls of a certain age. She said in her portrait of herself: "Her mania has always been to want to be reasonable; and, just as women who feel their bodies cramped, fancy they have a good figure, so, her reason having made her uncomfortable, she believed she had a lot of it." And, facing the terrors of the settlement, a pretty manner, as of a proud contracting party: "I made him understand that, in my situation, at the age I had attained, I should not be forgiven for changing my condition except for a fortune which would appear extremely advantageous, and that, in a word, I was like those antiquities which increase in price with their age."

Only she should have remained Mlle. Delaunay. De Staël's fortune was not enough for a witty woman.

I have no preconceived notion concerning love, which I distrust intensely as I do all collaboration. An elegant marriage between superior mortals, proud of each other, refined enough to save all of their life through intelligence of death. I discover no other form of it desirable.

What is there in certain books? It is not style, or the rest. There is talent, but there is also talent elsewhere. But, as soon as we enter these, we breathe in them a special atmosphere. We pick them up languidly, as we do every book at the beginning, and then suddenly we sit up, we revive,

we are ourselves again, as if someone arrived—a brilliant visit on a rainy day. I believe that it is the *tone*—rarity of rarities—and that "style" banishes it instead of bestowing it. Tone is to style what physiognomy is to beauty—the flow of the lines. By dint of sacrificing to the phrase and to the word, those who write them forget their manner, their own special turn. For the sake of a modest increment of metaphysics, they lose the nervous authority of the phrase. I note this value of tone only in writers who have a physical constitution.

They must have the habit of charm in their flesh, in order to find it when they write. Now charm, like distinction, is a refinement of tact, and I very much inclined to say that, to write in a superior fashion, one has to have an aristocracy of gesture and of skin. Examples: note the shade between Flaubert and the Goncourts, between Bourget, Hervieu and d'Aurevilly, Curel, between Renan and Nietsche, between Georges Sand and Mathilda Serao, between Marcelle Tinayre and the Comtesse de Noailles, between Mme. H. de Régnier and her who is to come.

*March 4*

"You always live two years ahead." When I look a hundred yards away, when I see where I am and what there is behind. To avoid seismic disturbances, I think of a Russian grand duchess who also had to wait, to wait imperially. "Eighteen years of boredom and solitude made her read many books."

"Que m'importe le soir,
Puisque mon âme est pleine
De la vaste rumeur du jour
Où j'ai vécu.
Que d'autres, en pleurant,
Maudissent la fontaine
D'avoir entre leurs doigts
Ecoulé son eau vaine,

Où brille au fond l'argent de quelque anneau perdu.

Le souvenir unit, en ma longue mémoire,
La volupté rieuse au souriant amour.
Et le Passé debout me chante, blanche, ou noire,
Sur sa flûte d'ébène ou sur sa flûte d'ivoire,
Sa tristesse ou sa joie au pas léger ou lourd.
Ce ne sera pas trop du Temps sans jours ni nombre,
Ni de tout le silence et de toute la nuit
Qui sur l'homme à jamais pèse au sépulcre sombre.
Ce ne sera pas trop, vois-tu, de toute l'ombre,
Pour lui faire oublier ce que vécut en lui.
(Henri de Régnier, Inscriptions lues au soir tombant) [1]

[1] What matters the evening to me, since my soul is filled with the vast clamor of the day during which I have lived. How many others, weeping, curse the fountain for having spilled between their fingers the vain water where, at the bottom, shines the silver of some lost ring. Remembrance unites, in my long memory, laughing pleasure to smiling love. And the Past, standing erect, sings to me, white or black, on its eben or ivory flute, its sadness or its joy with light or heavy step. Nor will Time, without days and without number, nor all silence and all the night which weighs forever upon man in the sombre sepulchre, nor all the shade, be too much to make him forget what has lived in him.
(Inscriptions read at Night-fall.)

*April 8*

Guizot said to Princess Lucien, who never read: "You should always have a living person before you." I thought she was right, and said that books are forgeries. N. B. Oh! there are persons who are very bad books.

Another remark of Guizot's to the Princess: "I have no ordinary desires. I welcome high hopes only. I can dispense with what I lack, but I cannot be content below the level of my ambition. And, in our relation to each other, my ambition has been infinitely greater than in all the other interests in which my life may be diffused."

*Brest, Thursday, July 28*

No city resembles Brest, none of the other ports. Nowhere else are the streets so narrow and the houses so high. Light-colored houses, flat and gray, which have not even the charm of somberness. Hard and pale, they slope like the sides of a gorge. An eternal current of air adds to the distress of narrow things without proportions.

The Penfeld [1] shut in, encumbered by naval material, the port constructed on stilts above the rock. All is cooped up, all is alley, channel, strait. And its seaview, the Promenade du Cours, is so meager a terrace facing the magnificent enclosed roadstead at the entrance to the harbour that,

[1] River at whose mouth is situated the naval port of Brest. Tr.

along these hundred kilometers of Ocean, and along these coasts which are open country, you breathe less than when you cross the Place de la Concorde.

The city ought to be called Angustine.

The navy, poor and sad, has made it so. O navy, O my mother! Young men roam the streets in wide rows of white caps. They are slow and they have the deliberateness of gesture and the ardour of expression with which men brood over and betray a happiness. And this happiness is departure.

At eighteen they know what it is to depart, and for very far, for very long. My father, at their age, walked, like them, in the same Rue de Siam. My grandfather and his father also.

*Le Trez-Hir, September 20*

The spirit of these copy-books tires me. It bores me to distil sadness. I am physically saturated with it. When I awake night and morning, I no longer see a handle by which to take hold of life. Instinct, the first impulse, is for distress. A little wider awake, the reactions begin, the mood changes, and I am able to be no more tragic than is worth while.

What fills me with consternation, what dismays me, is not the future, which could never be anything but better, were it advanced old age, but those fifteen years which lie behind me. . . . One morning, while I had typhoid, I was surprised, worried,

because I could not recall whether I had slept or waked all night.

## 1905

*Paris, January 9*

I do not love rebels who are victims and, consequently, are without strength. So much the worse for the "*outlaws*" [1] who are incapable of being the pillagers of society. M. de Talleyrand was a considerably more effective corsair than Byron, and that autocratic person, Catherine d'Anhalt-Zerht, a rather more emancipated feminist than our modern claimants.

*January 22*

I no longer write, I fall into forgetfulness, and I am wrong. But what is to become of you when sadness bores you?

I should do myself this justice, that it has long distracted me. We are very right to love only those who are happy. The sufferers are in the wrong. Happiness! happiness! at any price whatsoever. Why have I this incredible expression of happiness, this animation of bearing and of features? I am stricken in the sole physical way which leaves no trace. It is as invisible as a moral wound. It leaves you intact on the surface and gnaws your life from within.

[1] In English. Tr.

I admit nothing but happiness and I do not want it any more, because one should always have been happy. Better never than too late.

One should, at twenty, be possessed of every pride, causing it to be loved by analogous perfections in the opposite sex, and then, there you are, for eternity! The rest is patch-work, disorder, subterfuge and approximation. I have been too in love with life, life for its own sake, the simple existence which consists in moving, seeing, hearing. I have kept, from my childhood, so prodigious a memory of laughter and mirth, profound as love, the enchantment of every day and every awaking, that, short of getting these back again as I had them before, I shall always consider myself sick and fallen.

How is it that all those people who see, like the Gods, the details and the distances, who possess the whole life of things and of beings, the real presence of the infinite world; all those who thrill with sounds and voices, the profound shock of human voices and of musical voices which would suffice to themselves alone—how is it they do not tremble, do not cry aloud for happiness, between one sleep and another? They would believe themselves obliged to be poets, or perhaps even drunkards, in order to profit from themselves to such an extent.

I, for my part, ask only the things which my eyes give back to me every day. I abandon the beings who must be heard, and this awaited morrow in

itself fills me with fever and would avenge me for death.

*August 6*

It has taken time, but I begin to love normality, the common life, according to the vulgarest natural and social laws. . . . Everything that might have been she who would be I, if a little girl of thirteen had not dined one day, while travelling, in a house where another little girl was about to have measles.

I close my eyes when I awake in the sun, with the swaying of the trees in the park reflected in all the mirrors—I close my eyes and I see what would be. I would awake at Tamaris, Algiers or Pera, as in my childhood, to gunboats' whistles, to the shock of cannon firing salutes.

I should be alone because he would be on guard or on a cruise. The children, from eight to ten, would sing: "*Shew fly, don't bother me,*" [1] to the air of the *oupa-oupa*, or one of those creole tunes of which no one ever knew more than the first words. My Breton nurse would say to me: "Madame, the roadstead is out-of-bounds," as people speak of the thunder or of the last judgment; or else "Monsieur has sent word by the postman that he would dispatch the whaleboat for eleven o'clock." I should pass my days on the poop with the papers or the reviews from the wardroom, the shores and the city would be far away, the sea profound and transparent, the ships in the harbour would

[1] In English. Tr.

"swing" with the hours. Raising my eyes, there where I had Pera, I should now have the coasts of Asia. I should follow the animation of the roads, the boats which salute in passing. Two sailors, above my head, would wash a whale-boat eternally. From time to time I should have visitors: the surgeon, the second-mate, the abbé. Even the helmsman's *toc-tocs* would not bother me any longer. "Commander, the barge is going to come alongside."

I should be simple and without desires; but whatever my situation in the terrestrial hierarchy, I would find on board my rank as daughter of France.

*November 29*

I do not write any more because it is not working, and because I can no longer derive any aid from it in raising my spirits.

Spirits! Is it really I who no longer have any? I wish for nothing nowadays, I work without desiring success and, if I meet it, I do not desire to follow it up.

I desire ensembles only, a life which would be complete in all its parts; and, for that, an accumulation of results still so far, so far. . . .

In spite of whatever might be thought, I am too human for my estate, and I believe I lose everything because the normal has not happened to me.

Normal beings, who constitute the plurality, give

their definitions and we believe in them superstitiously.

Why demoralize myself by preconception, and succumb through prejudice to the "tenderness of regret"? At bottom, quite lucidly considered, what is there in this normal life?

There is certainly happy marriage. But, in the finest marriage, and especially where the woman is concerned, does one conserve that vital energy of solitude towards which our preferences are so strangely directed?

As children, we take no account of the sainthoods which were not virginal—we even despise them completely. Later, we hold less, no doubt, to absolute integrity, but we have the taste for it, the secret preference for free lives. Due allowance being made, consider what occurs within you when you say: Wagner or Louis of Bavaria, George Sand or the Empress of Austria, Ernest Renan or Gustave Flaubert? And—shall I say it?—does not Lucile's presence explain the whole distance between Camille Desmoulins and Saint-Just?

What draws us toward one another, what we feel for the living or the dead, for those whom we meet or for those whom we admire, is, however far it may be confessed, always love—the love encountered on the threshold of intimacies. Give Marie Bashkirtseff a love, and tell me if you do not destroy her. Make Charlotte Corday Barbaroux's mistress, and you render her act ridiculous.

To Mme. X. . . . Since you name Nietzsche, I have half a mind to answer you in his manner: "Yes, I have written dangerously, but what is there which is not redoubtable in whatever is beautiful in the world? Has not Christianity been preached dangerously?" Is there really anything in death, such as it is implied by great enthusiasms, wherewith to dishonor fanaticism? One will never do worse than to defy his own death and other people's. Is it then so serious? And would it be better to live without martyrdom and without faith?

In the last analysis, I went to Saint-Just, just as Barrès went to Bonaparte, "without social or moral prejudice," to ask him for "ardour," and do you know, Madame, that Barrès to whom I had sent nothing, congratulated me, within twenty-four hours, on "these exalting pages"?

The less one thinks like Saint-Just, the more the reprobation will be energetic, the more one ought to repeat to one's self, with the Imitation: "Idle, ever-muttering servitor, blush, then, that there should be men who are more bent upon their ruin than you upon your salvation, and for whom their passion, their crime, has more attraction than truth for you."

## 1906

*February 16*

How miserable are they who fear the reality of great men. In advance I was sure I should not be

disappointed. My principle is that a man always appears to be what he is. A single little shock, at the entrance of this tall, slender lad whom you would take to be 25. He is not good-looking; but, as Comtesse Potocka said of Napoleon, you would not want him to have another countenance. It is the one which harmonizes with his accomplishment. Thin and refined, it is the most finished of faces, the most successful for the expression of insolence and disgust. Withal, first prince of intelligence, and fashioned to crush whatever is not of its domain. . . . In that long office, the sole luxury of which consists in immaterial things—books and museum souvenirs—that luxury which is inaccessible to almost everyone—I felt myself at a center where all the affairs of thought converged, just as, formerly, all the affairs of Europe converged at Versailles.

"O existence! you attach only through the past and you interest only through the future. The present moment, transitory and almost unperceived, will owe its sole value to the souvenirs of which it will, perhaps, one day be the object."

(Anne de Coigny, quoted by Maurras in the *Avenir de l'Intelligence.*)

*May 15*

It is unheard of that I have not yet found the work I can love. The literary deviation was perhaps less to have been expected in my case than might have been believed. I should have to come

to it, however; for it alone "would make enough of a mark to measure the time I have lived." This winter, for example, has counted for me as a week.

I have watched the time pass to such an extent, I have measured it so much, that I feel I know the weight of what is left. I picture it to myself perfectly. In a word, I can conceive it in the sense in which philosophers say it is impossible.

And this time, so marvellously observed, has taught me nothing as to myself, does not bring me an idea, a bit of information. When I want, in my turn, to form a conception of myself, I must return to childhood. It is with the aid of its memories alone that I recompose myself, that I feel myself to be one thing and not another.

*June 2*

And next year at Jerusalem!

*June 11*

"Sufficient disdain," Barrès has written. It is not a foolish attitude of sour grapes, for disdain is always a greater desire. When I go, when I leave this chatter, what impression of salvation on returning to work! What joy to leave off lounging for a good accelerated pace leading somewhere.

*June 28*

A singular result of the lack of habitual happiness, is to be an alien in one's own life. I no longer know the intimacy of other days, the confidence in the

house one loves, the familiarity of things, the space and horizon which a song sung, or perhaps the wish to sing, can bring into a room. One has the indifferences of strangers. Is it then necessary to love a man in order to love everything in his life? Is there really nothing but that to interpose between death and you?

*July 3*

My age impresses me to such extent that, literally, I never cease thinking of that menace of growing old, which haunts me like death. It is useless for me to say my: "Who resembles me?" to recall my promise and my pledge to last longer than other people; there are moments when I would no longer take a step towards success, towards an atonement, because I am not still 25.

Most people laugh and joke when they say how old some one is growing. This seems to me so common and vulgar . . . it is a sense of shame which they lack. And, at bottom, how foolishly happy one must be, or believe one's self to be, how one must regard his past with eagle-like intrepidity, in order to strike one's self from the list of the living with this idiotic laughter.

I love and feel myself sister to those souls only who believe so deeply in death that they already respect it in themselves.

Finding X . . . aged, and saying so gaily, I had the impression of having betrayed troops uncovered by an unexpected manoeuvre on a battle-field. I

must have appeared very frivolous when I replied that, the farther I went, the younger I seemed to myself, that really I did not think that, in sixty years, we had time to grow old, and that physical demolition struck me as an inexplicable waste.

It is, perhaps, because I have not served, that I am unforgiving for those who go to pieces quickly. It is a form of cowardice.

And all this gives me something breathless, hurried. Even trips, carriages, the tramway itself, do not relax me, do not break my tension. Alone now, I speak—a word without meaning—but as if I had to protest; and I blush as if I had committed a terrible blunder. And yet one is not hysterical when one sleeps ten hours at a stretch.

What maddens me is not the future. On the contrary, there I am very nearly sure of myself. It is when I look back.

There exists at present a portrait of me, and it makes me afraid.

I do not "rebel." That word is as stupid as it is useless with regard to necessary things; but I live in the most perfect and the most diurnal state of non-acceptance.

*Marly-Fribourg, August 11*

What we love in the mountains is not the mountains themselves, but the different ways in which they open space. It is the gap, the interval which moves us. They alone teach us new horizons. It is

the void which appeals to us in the mountains, just as the sigh is said to be the essence of music.

*Paris*

Speaking of occultism, I said to them that I should have no trouble believing in everything, that there was only one thing in which I should never believe—human testimony.

*October 13*

Being deaf is probably not hearing; but, in any case, it is keeping silent.

Whatever the spontaneous impulse which stirs you, be it only an exclamation, to resist the communicative prejudice, to recall that your milieu, your movement, is not that of other people: to keep silent. Whatever the conversation, the present discussion of which people talk to you, whatever the repercussion of impatience or of enthusiasm experienced by you, whatever the avenging reply, to bite your lips, to remind yourself that they are talking, that they are screaming: to keep silent.

To meet an illustrious personage, a sympathetic being, a poor eccentric, to be skilled in every manner of greeting, to feel in others the desire to make an advance, but, as I do not speak, to have to make it alone, like maniacs: to pass on and keep silent. Supreme school of *self control*,[1] of non-spontaneity, of solitude and of indifference.

[1] English in the original. Tr.

We have two *moralities:* that of complete consciousness and of broad day-light, and that of night, of half-consciousness.

For me everything goes better. My eyes make such progress that, in two years, three years, I shall read lips.

Saint-Just has been for me a first result. I have learned to finish, I have finished a novel, and I recognize myself in each of its sentences. I acknowledge them all. That is to say, I can now do what I want. It would, without doubt, be more artistic to groan over the non-realization of "my dream." That is a bravado which shall never be mine. I can work, foresee, but not dream. For me, the idea will never be lovelier than the work. I do not know what is an idea which is not a sentence, and the written phrase is always a progress, an effort, over the thought phrase. Thus I am what is called in possession of my talent. I have in me enough to work with, I do not say, like Delacroix, for four hundred years, but for six or seven. My opinion is that everything is given to those who know how to take. Whatever the point of departure, you have only to go ahead, for *everything is related;* and, just as, in the mystery of movement, the passage from one to another is so insensible and already implied, that there is no reason to be astonished at anything.

And yet I awake in a nightmare, as to an alarm of despair. One must indeed, be saturated to despair of one's self mechanically!

Let the future be what it will, now that I have lived a life, and that is irreparable.

Does there exist a happiness which would make me forgive that?

To live as if it awaited you.

*December 20*

It is not happiness I have most missed: it is *distraction*. If I could live with other people, they would perhaps bore me, but they would distract me.

It is by the infinitely little things that other people should be judged, because they are unsuspecting. I present two indicative symptoms, like the thumb and the ear in anthropometrics.

Study sincerity in the way of telling the time. A person who is late will say five minutes less; one in a hurry, five minutes more.

For benevolence, unconscious sympathy or antipathy, ask a trifling bit of information—whether it is going to rain a day when you have no umbrella—the response will almost invariably be to the effect least advantageous for you. One will believe it to be so because it is the instinct of legitimate defence against the happiness of others; and because, moreover, the *sentiment of exactitude* is not human. It is scientific; and, in science, it would seem to belong only to genius.

By dint of seeing them dabble about in approximations, I feel myself becoming inexorable, like Saint-Just.

They speak of integrity, of loyalty and they are false—false without knowing it, perhaps, but what matter intentions? I do not weigh merits. The worst is what one is, not what one wants to be.

To console M. de C . . ., who has not converted me to free-will by lending me Fonsegrive. I said to him that responsibility could be saved by shifting it from the act to the being. One is accountable to God for being a thistle and not a rose, whatever Julia de Trécoeur's husband may say.

*December 25*

The boulevards are so gay . . . and I cry as I walk quickly, I cry a little. The children have such brilliant eyes—our eyes at Brest. I want to take a head haphazard, to clasp it in my furs, to say: "You are life, the normal life I cannot have. There are millions like you and, for me, it is the unattainable.

In a nice mood to receive that Italian who comes to me from Florence. He has read the *Mercure* and wants to see me. He wants to see Barrès. I am going to have to be orthodox: "But he knew better than pride, he knew disdain." Saint-Just felt the vanities of this world and rid himself of them, as they did at Port Royal. His scorn for the ephemeral, his detachment from that which does not last, has the intonations of the cloister and its obsessions. There is something of the inward man in Saint-Just—the man who refuses himself and

bears an intangible life. It is that which permitted him to take so high a tone with Danton and, very possibly, with his scaffold."

## 1907–1913

*January 5, 1907*

A new year for me is a perfectly level, empty steppe to be crossed at a gallop. Beyond, perhaps. . . .

*January 13*

Pierre Laugier is dead, exactly two months—to a day—after our long conversation at Carle's wedding. It was Aunt Hélène who heard and translated; but it was I who urged him on, and it was I whom he persuaded of his masterly and sober mimetic as a member of the Français, scarcely more skilful than that of Mgr. Le Nordez or of Me. du Buit, preacher and lawyer.

I had started him on the theater for women, saying that society girls would come to it of necessity and that, short of happening upon a very superior husband, I counselled "the boards" for my friends.

He said: "She is charming, charming, charming. She is absolutely in the wrong, but she says things which are very just." And later, to my Aunt G. . . .: "Why does not that girl marry? I cannot marry her, I am already taken." I promised myself

that he would find me one day on the boards, and on his, "in spirit and in truth." He was to come to see me. I said, illogically: "I want him to, because he is the son of a member of the Institut, and the nephew of Admiral Arago."

Laugier formed part of my gallery. I experience a sense of loss at seeing its numbers diminish, and I feel that if three or four men, of whom I have seen but one, plus a single woman, disappeared, I should become discouraged with being —I should not bother about existing for other people—and I regard myself as one of their reasons for living. For it would not be worth while writing if there were not readers like me.

We exist only for each other. We are all that we have left. There is my philosophy.

*February 16*

I said to Mama: "Our theatre is immoral." I am going to write a moral play and no one knows in the least what it will prove.

*February 28*

We are leaving this pretty, convenient apartment with its windows overlooking the park of the Hotel St. Senoch,[1] which occupies one side of the street, and which I discovered with delight one day when it snowed. We are going to live in a boarding-house. Mama adduces reasons of a material order and I

[1] At Paris, in the Batignolles quarter. Tr.

insist upon it also. Everybody says: "You are never better than in your own home, liberty . . ." Truly? Your liberty? It is precisely this home of mine which I want to flee. With what discouragement I have come back to it daily for years, with what disgust for the house in which, a young girl, I live the life of an old woman. The house has no excuse for existence except through the family. Otherwise it is only the petty comfort of an old lady in easy circumstances, who owns her furniture: "Furniture is man's dearest possession!" There is no solitude which furniture does not console.

Certainly I love all these old things, but because they remind me of Brest. I feel myself the soul of a single house. The house, for me, is Brest. Elsewhere I am transient, a traveller. I need at least to simulate the provisional, not to accept it.

And then hotel life, were it only by reason of its distraction—yes, the distraction afforded even by the people who bore you—will be excellent for me.

I must absolutely receive some outside impressions. They are too lacking at home and I miss happiness less than distraction. This, to be sure, I think one has the right to say: that one needs to be surrounded and that "the desire for solitude is better than solitude itself."

*May 7*

I declared to Andrée that, as far as I could see sadness was a form of imbecility. Yes, it is sadness,

at bottom, which is right; but it is not sad people who have invented sadness. They are not those who know it best. Whatever is worn on the face is vain. "Looking sad" does not necessarily imply sadness: it is remembering the onlookers. Real sadness has no expression.

Que d'autres cherchent l'air des bois de la montagne,
Et la brise des Océans.
Je m'enfonce dans l'ombre où nul ne m'accompagne.
Je respire chez les géants.
Vous êtes mes vaisseaux, mes rives, mes grands arbres,
Mon soleil, mon ardent matin.
Qu'ai-je besoin d'amis, j'ai les hommes de marbre
Qui se penchent sur mon destin.[1]

(*Les Eblouissements.*)

A poet to keep an eye on.[2] She has a talent on my scale.

*June 3*

To Renée. I love perfect beings only, and want to see no others; and after all it is among celebrities that there is most chance of encountering talents and well-conducted activities.

It is certain that what differentiates them is not

[1] Let others seek the air of the mountain woods, and the ocean breezes. I bury myself in the shade where no one accompanies me. I breathe among giants. You are my vessels, my shores, my great trees, my sun, my ardent morning. What need have I of friends? I have men of marble who bend over my destiny.

[2] Comtesse Mathieu de Noailles. Tr.

so much their faculties, as their deliberate intention of profiting by them. Those who succeed—whatever the prejudice with regard to artists—are characters who have proved capable of disciplining their effort. This is seen the moment they move; and this precision, this *aim* which is felt in their acts, is, I believe, what maintains in them their extraordinary youthfulness. *They are beings who have never finished living.*

(After a call on Mme. Duclaux.)

*Ouchy, September 20*

To Mme. D. . . . What I lose more and more is the notion of time. A year is the same today as a month when I was ten years old. I would not say that it passes very quickly; a year, on the contrary, seems to me to have the feeble content but, on the other hand, the immediacy of a single day. That is why I am very faithful without seeming to be so.

Why do you never leave Brittanny? It is so agreeable to move about in the world, to have one's corners and one's habits there, as within a single city.

*Villa Saïd, November 11, 1907*

Mmes. de Noailles, de Régnier, Delarue-Mardrus —yes, there we have talents and there we have rivals. Mmes. Tinayre and Colette Yver are intelligent. Yet, no. Why? They are not writers. *They do not re-think what they see.*

They are gossips and talkers. When they write, they are not occupied with feeling, they do not create a new correspondence between style and life. They are not sensibility-forces. We have nothing to inherit from them.

There is in literature: (1) literature which is written and felt, and (2) spoken literature, without any nervous discharge. The first three lines of a book place it immediately in one class or the other. They edify as to the laziness or the attentiveness of the method.

A man who writes a thread-bare sentence like this: "The violin which sings and cries like a human voice"—I have just read it in Rod—is a man who has not got a distinct notion of himself, who does not distinguish the style of his own original ideas. Maupassant was neither a brain nor even an extraordinary sensibility; but method has been hammered into his head, and his work issues felt, not only from the environments which he studied, but from his being as a writer.

Spoken literature is quickly written, but it does not give thought the good allurement of style, the happy expansion of effort. It does not carry its man very far. It gives him perhaps power over his work, but not that working of self by self which renders several individuals who have written, the best statues of humanity—the most highly wrought and complete of beings, together with the monks and the saints.

To write, not for the sake of speaking, or even of writing: for the sake of being, in order to become greater and greater in one's thought and in one's heart.

## 1908

*February 8, 1908*

Nothing consoles, for nothing replaces. Men have not naïvely cheated themselves as to quantity in desiring eternal life. We need infinite possibilities so as not to have to choose. It is the limited future which renders the past unacceptable.

*February 26*

When you are saturated with literature, you end by no longer wanting any but extreme forms: the most lyrical: poetry, and the dryest: the drama. For drama is the essence of the novel, without padding and without discursiveness, without colouring. It is sculpture; and, for the moment, one would say I prefer being a sculptor.

The other day, crossing the Seine by the Pont de l'Alma, I recognized the spring by the stronger light. For me, this new turn of the wheel, after a winter without feeling, spells the fatigue of the day you see dawning after a sleepless night. To lose the notion of time! "You always live three years ahead." My present also is composed of three or four years. I feel three months as others feel a

week. That is why impatience is unknown to me. If I am rapid, it is through love of well-executed movement. I am irremediably lacking in haste and in anguish. Only I recognize that life is more perfect in a better detached present. To shut one's self up in a day as in a cell. . . .

It is boredom which has most dehumanized me. I believe more in boredom that in suffering to operate radical transformations. Besides, sick people's boredom is not the same as that of the well. The boredom I speak of is that of the prison. It is unimaginable how inadvertently I work at my literary advancement. I am obliged to call myself to order. It is not that it escapes me that the sole possible future lies there.

*May 16*

We are wrong. We call style, having style, being literary, though it is a fact having nothing to do with grammar. It is the presence of thought and of observation in the phrase which, the quality of the writing being equal, makes the great writer. If the phrase is without interest, the work and the author bore me; and the literature of men and women who are not superior, however hallowed, will always seem to me nil, because of the emptiness of the phrase.

One must have felt as profoundly as I the need of being distracted, and the fatigue of useless reading, to understand the physical impossibility it is for me to read an insignificant sentence.

*June 20*

Mama always makes me begin over again my business letters to my editors or other people. She says they display such indifference that she wonders whether it is not a pose, adding that, if I take my work so very lightly, it is not worth while doing anything at all. It is evident that I do not take it lightly, since I want it, and that, if my indifference were evident to me, I should deem it maladroit. But I do it at such a distance! Enjoy it? Enjoyment for me is not so easy.

Isolated results cannot accomplish much in a lifetime. Now what would I need to be satisfied, to escape from my humdrum regimen? Not happiness, assuredly. For me, it would not be on the right scale; and love as it is sung and as it is described—as it is lived, especially—is the dullest of dull things.

## 1910

I have seen Blum[1] and read his extraordinary book.

It is so hard for me to understand love outside of marriage. . . . A man stirs me because he can be my life, the visage, the presence, the tenderness of every day, and not because he has some sort of right of possession and perturbation over me.

Mme. Mardrus' book is so much admired. *Comme Tout le Monde*,[2] I find it admirable, but

[1] Léon Blum: *Du Mariage*. Tr.

[2] The title of Mme. Lucie Delarue-Mardus' novel. Tr.

there enters into this admiration an element to be mistrusted. A long letter from Vandérem has clearly proved it to me. The rural and respectable always overawes us. We believe *it is stronger.* This is a naturalistic legend. The classic masterpieces are aristocratic. Superior beings and higher classes are more definitive human experiments.

La Rochefoucauld, La Bruyère, Vauvenargues, Pascal and Bossuet himself are wordly psychologists.

*Paris, October 1910*

There is one sensation which Grand Duke Cyril and I shall have experienced in common. When the *Petropawlosk* blew up before Port Arthur, the Grand Duke was thrown into the sea. His thick fur-coat formed a buoy and he began to come slowly, slowly up from the depths of the icy water. He said it seemed to him he would never reach the surface.

Since then I have never forgotten Grand Duke Cyril.

At luncheon Mme. D . . . showed me Daniel Halévy: "You have a great friend in common: the Empress of Austria." And then: "How does it happen that you admire a woman who is identical with you?"

People have begun to talk a good deal to me about *Les Affranchis.* Oh! I perceive that I am not

always satisfied, even when we talk with M. . . . Example: For her, Marthe is the best "character." Agreed, but the main thing was to write the two roles of Philippe and Hélène. This perpetual decomposition of a work into "character" is a custom of naturalistic, and perhaps of romantic, criticism. Character carried thus far is mania, *mannerism*—the mania of the hump and of deformation—see Mirbeau. I want, above all, *to create.* It is from scene to scene that my characters are revealed to me. I have no preconceived ideas concerning them. In order to leave the play its full value as generalization, I need, on the contrary, normal personages and, if possible, personage-types.

The "character," in the manner of Meredith, for example, is a kind of game, a weakness, an exaggeration; and "whatever is exaggerated is insignificant." La Bruyère is infinitely truer, more observing, in his chapters on the heart and on women, than in his too amusing characters. Hélène and Philippe, who are everybody, are not less themselves than Marthe—a little more special, because less deep. . . . I repeat it incessantly: Picturesqueness is a surface accident, and it is always the minor personages who, in my work, will give this impression of "character," in the naturalistic sense. But I beg people to be careful and not confound character with *life.* Were we dramatized, neither you nor I would be characters. Are we the less living on

that account? Is the hunchback truer than we are? The soldier truer than the civilian? The simple citizen than the man of the world? The lover than the non-lover? And I will even go so far as to say that the truth of César Birotteau, who is constantly soaring and falling back on his feet, does not in the least gain, in my opinion, through the arbitrary addition of a *tic*. There, surely, is where Balzac is imitable!

What I shall demand justice for most insistently is the *gift of life*. Without the guide-rope, the leading-string of character, I give you living beings who hold together absolutely, whose speeches have *accent*—that savour of life which you will find only in Curel and Ibsen, and then only when Ibsen does not go in for psychology. Give the subject of *Les Affranchis* for a prize competition, and I will defy you to find a dialogue of this simplicity and of this vital resonance. Here the subject creates an illusion. These are beings at odds with a moral system, hence they are "philosophic entities."

Abominable little newspapers!

Hélène and Philippe are philosophers just as M. Jourdain was a grammarian. "Nothing can equal a cry of passion," François de Curel wrote me—he too! But passion is speechless. The cry of passion, without metaphors, is onomatopeia. As soon as you begin to use words, you have to become intelligible and abandon *inarticulate* passion, Carlyle would say. Besides, I do not see what passion

loses thereby. When Hélène cries: "Ah! these people who are cured and who are as proud of themselves as old women, because they survive!" she seems to me to have found a cry of passion worth more than: "I shall die of it!" And Philippe, exhorted to be resigned, to be proud of the duty accomplished by him to "establish the reign of order at Warsaw," reveals to me an intenser passion than if he lamented: "It is too much, my God, it is too much!"

For me, what makes the value of *Les Affranchis* is the fact that the drama of passion and the drama of ideas are so welded together that you cannot, at any instant, decompose the amalgam. Philippe's supplication to Hélène, his prayer before dying: "I want, I want to be paid my price in love!" Hélène's startled cry: "It will not make you love me any more!" Do you not feel that, in such a scene, just as on a battle-field, it is the more instinctive, the more *passive* being who is at stake?

I have given eloquent formulas, *clear* formulas to reflexes, to profound impulsions of instinct. Have I betrayed their passion? In a passionate crisis, which is necessarily a moral debate, will you say to me, if you please: "Here you leave the language of passion and enter upon that of ideas"?

My heroes do not once say to each other: "I love you." I confess that this had seemed to me a distinction, a more exacting manner of appealing to the public: "I should no longer be able to dis-

pense with this certitude, when I awake, of having you under my roof . . ." *Hélène, very simply:* "Nor I."

That is their declaration. Evidently I have not portrayed passion. Quite on the contrary, my heroine reasons: "Is it my fault if you are greater, nobler, more thrilling than them all . . . ? The shame would have been not to understand, the cowardice not to prefer you with all my strength. How can I help it! I love you as I did not know it was possible to love!" would be more impassioned.

If you do not find passion in *Les Affranchis*, I ask you what right you have to find it in *Phèdre* and *Bérénice?*

This is Antoine's preamble to his programme:

"Monsieur,

"After the literary success of the Saturday matinées last season, the management of the Odéon, continuing the execution of a methodical programme, organizes a series of matinées which will, this year, be exclusively devoted *to the production of new authors and unpublished works.*

"The programme which you will read, on the other hand, is the result of a minute selection among the hundreds of manuscripts submitted to the Odéon and, with the exception of Maurice de Faramond, none of these writers has as yet been played.

"The public, we hope, will appreciate the importance and significance of this experiment,

which has not been renewed since the time of the Théâtre Libre, and from which may spring the whole theatrical movement of tomorrow."

If, as the Greghs say, Antoine has devised these matinées for me, I believe it is time to take this journal up again and count the points in the reverse order.

I shall always be an ascetic. The other day, coming back charmed by Henri de Régnier's simplicity and distinction, I said: "Ah! how much more important it is to be than to do . . ." "It is more difficult," answered Mama.

There is where Mme. Duclaux excels. She *is* with perfection. In the first place, this participation of her whole self in each moment of her life. This is called presence of mind. I believe rather in a free disposal of self obtained by a fine inward gymnastic and the good upkeep of the machine. And then, that charm, that attentiveness to others, that gift of the just response, that tact in speaking of herself only as much as you want her to. What quickness of judgment, too! You feel that she is good, and yet she says everything. It is an unabated goodness. And what beauty without beauty. . . . I watched her listening, religious and young, with her beautiful attentive lashes, her Tanagra figure and arms.

## 1911

*February*

Curel, speaking of my plays, expressed his astonishment that the field of my experience was

so limited. I said that there was no field more or less limited, more or less extended—that it was the same thing for everybody.

The truth is that the limits are in us, or rather the extent is in us. What reaches us from without, after a very brief time, can merely be repetition.

Recall Marcus Aurelius: "He who has seen one year has seen all."

*March 31*

Speaking of *Le Tribun*—which, moreover, I have not read—I said that Bourget has always given me the impression of being better than his works; he has ideas, he poses problems, and he scarcely touches them. *Divorce, Enigme, Emigré, Barricade* —he can proceed only with the aid of a melodramatic development, which is something else—a subject in a subject. In the three plays cited, he has been unable to construct an action out of the idea. It is expressed accessorily, by long discourses. The subject of *Le Divorce* is the love-story of the young man and of the girl-student. The action is there. In *L'Emigré*, equally, the romance of the following generation, the sensational steward robber and the incredible blunder of the other father, which annuls problem and idea. *La Barricade.* Pataud has said it: it is feminine tittle-tattle. There is so constant a lack of skill in the destruction of the idea by an optional clause and, worse still, in an accidental denouement—the death of the

first husband in *Le Divorce*—that it becomes lack of intelligence. But, if Bourget really treated the subjects that he announces, if he went so far as to put this idea into action, he would be Ibsen or Curel.

People have talked so much of my sensibility this winter—or rather, according to these gentlemen of 50—of my insensibility—that I feel the need of writing here what I cannot, after all, say in a preface. But, in the first place, let it be thoroughly understood that I do not even discuss the coldness of *Les Affranchis*. The young writers have disposed of this incredible commonplace. The day I discover, in one of my colleagues, an equal degree of intense and contained passion, I declare that I shall fall in love with him, were he the husband of a Marthe Alquier and the least Nietzschean man in the world.

Now, here is what I have to say on my own behalf . . . Rémy de Gourmont is right. "Sentimental experience," in the sense in which he understands it, does not exist in me.

I shall soon be 36, Mlle. de Lespinasse's age: but shall I find her adventure tomorrow? I have the absolutely distinct sentiment that my critics and I would have our trouble for our pains, that nothing would be changed on either side. A human life, whatever you may make of it, a real, material life, is too little for a talent to feed on. If you need real adventure, lose all hope. Memories are the bed of Procustes for all invention; and, for me, observation

is invention. Otherwise, the observation of a man of genius would not surpass another's.

I shall add that I believe myself much more advanced sentimentally than women I have seen traverse the known stages of marriage and of adventure. Life holds only what we put into it, what we bring to it. Were I to meet the fine sentimental opportunity tomorrow, I should not regret the lost years, I should not tell myself that it arrived too late. I should think of the Sybilline books. Fifteen years ago, ten years ago, five years ago, even, I should not have found in it what I should find there tomorrow. I do not at all believe in youth. We become sincere, we become ourselves, after 30 only.

Well, in all sincerity, and as if speaking for posterity, what is this sensibility such as my life, my own life, so different, has been able to fashion it for 20 years?

In the first place, a great disgust for all that does not count, and something infallible, trenchant in the art of discerning it; since that which does not count is paid for by a grim boredom. Now, in spite of all that I am—my journal bears witness to it—I have never ceased to admit that I was bored. This is why I have slight esteem for those who are never bored; for I know well that, were I in their place. . . . This is why, also, "my successes" cannot do much for my present happiness, and afford me almost no distraction. I said at once: "I do not feel them"; and, to enable us to reach this

point, how admirable is Mme. Swetchine's saying: "It is through the mind that we are entertained, but it is the heart which keeps us from being bored." Do not hasten to conclude that I would exchange my talent for a normal life, "in order to be loved." If I have my talent, it is *through amorous exigency*. It is the measure of what I was worth in love. And I need it, and I would not dispense with it because of these new rights which it confers upon me, which I have sought so hard, to which I felt, at the age of ten, that I would give my life, when I asked them of sainthood: the rights to the greatest possible love.

Still another article in the *Depêche de Toulouse*, and the debate of ideas, which is not the conflict of hearts, and my polar style, etc. How stupid an intelligent man can be, then! Besides I do not know whether this man is intelligent.

No one is paid more than I to find life inconsolable without heart. No one is less capable of experiencing cerebral satisfactions. Glory bores me. I have transposed my Jansenism. I have lost nothing of my scorn of "the world," and I know always what is "the Way, the Truth, the Life," and what is not. Only, only, how can we express our heart if not with what is most magnificent in our brain? Oh! the *visceral thoracic* conception of sentiment!

As I wrote in that preface, which is, alas, so incomplete: "The brain is physiologically the true

heart of all human sentiments." But the heart is a special intelligence. God preserve me from the love of imbeciles! Love is the art of enjoying beings. It is made of attention and of penetration much more than of the devotion of which it has no need. For loving *is taking* and letting one's self be taken also; but there is nothing devoted in that. Love is not a virtue, it is happiness.

Is not this need of another personality strange and marvellous, in the extremely personal being that we are? How have men invented that? Sociability plays a greater part than desire in the invention of love. It is more astonishing, because more gratuitous. Perhaps it is for that reason that I admire marriage more than love. Sociability . . . "then it is true that men are all we enjoy, the rest is nothing."

It is the common life which most impresses me, solitary woman that I am, the daily returns to one another. . . . One must lack the least semblance of a soul not to feel that the true bonds are there, and not in some exaltation vulgarized by books, and doomed so quickly to resemble Sunday and holiday boredom.

Because he is ill-favored, I am tempted to attribute him personal and profound sentiments. This is a romantic and moral illusion, and it is called: judging by appearances.

I am asked for simplicity. Profound originality is taken, at first glance, for complication. Men are

so lazy the moment they are led where they are not accustomed to going. Simplicity calls a cat a cat and an ornithoryncus an ornithoryncus. All justness is simple. It is the precise Pascal and Barrès who are simple, and the prolix Montaigne and Bourget who are not simple; but the people, who are not simple, pretend to weigh the laws of simplicity.

*June 5, 1911*

What good is it to write in order to weep and to sob? Nothing is worse, and what could that teach me? It is my normal state. We weep only in the presence of some one, but always to have the trembling of tears within. . . .

Never has one of my contemporaries been so absent from his life as a writer—so alien, so closed to its joys, to its expectations. What matters to me a moment, after which I shall fall back once more? What matters is the daily, the continuous, *not being bored at table,* not going out alone for fifteen years, having one's friends about one, in a house of one's own, being able to laugh and to talk at any hour of the day with people of the same culture, whose eyes meet yours—the house gay, intimate, intelligent—our house at Brest, of old.

*Paris, November 4, 1911*

I spend my days at the tradesmen's and in the shops; and, although I love pretty things and I think that there, as elsewhere, one should seek

perfection, I am assailed every evening by scruples and disgust for this life, just as when I was Saint Theresa's daughter.

Inasmuch as we have to defend ourselves in order to belong to ourselves, to the real life which we love and which avenges us for death, everything passes in preparations, in intervals, in voids. . . . The trees along the Avenue du Bois, seen as you come out of the subway, the noble trees under the evening sky, are another remorse for me. Looking neither day nor night is not living either. And then again, although I am hardly a disciple of Tolstoy, the heartsickness at buying so much, when we think of those who do not buy at all. I should like to be rich enough to spend enormously on my dress, and to give exactly the same sum to the poor.

*November 10*

Our abstentions are an important part of ourselves. All that we are not, all that we do and say not, should perhaps count much more in this world where we have so little time to be, to say and to do; and what separates me from Nietzsche, whom I should love so much, is all that he has been unable to say. A single failure to abstain when it was necessary, a single error of taste, of tact and of education, quite legitimately destroys the opposite impressions already given. A woman's elegance is measured when she is not dressed, her education when she speaks to her children and her

servants, a writer's quality by what he has never written. I admire the writer whose average pleases me and does not bore me. The French alone have averages—some of them! Russians and English are good only in their big moments.

What I appreciate in Blum and in Barrès is their habitual turn of expression.

There are twenty possibilities of different loves and different happiness in the same man. It is for the woman to choose, to be attentive to the terms of the pact. The woman must prefer what she will have, and the man also prefers it.

It is less necessary, in love, to be the only one, than to be the first, and the first even *after*. Be unreplaceable and let yourself replace.

It is evidently not a formula of happiness, of constant happiness; but is woman any more constituted than man for immutably continued happiness? When we have had our life long opened on the future and its possibilities, when we have demanded of our solitude more ardour and impulse than men put into their passions, may not the finest conjugal friendship appear one day as a slackening? . . . Life is too unique not to call everything into question. There are, perhaps, other lives for women than those we have known. There may be something else between libertines and amorous fools. Certain women ruin men financially. Others might despoil the best of them of the happiness which could be theirs. Something like Turenne's money.

Most intelligent women—I am not thinking of women of letters—have lived in this fashion.

It is not indispensable that these ruined men should have been lovers.

## 1912

What stupor! You never know the surprises these critics are reserving for you. There are all the literatures in the world between them and you. I believe one must have been Catholic to admit the heroism of certain transports, the asceticism of every supreme ambition. It is only in religion that admiration imposes obligations, and that it is an *egredere*. The culture of the ego is religious. My "*Triomphatrice*" is not a Précieuse. She is a Carmelite.

Lanson said to my Aunt: "She does not understand criticism, and that will be her strength." Did I tell him that he had not understood my play, or am I going to pretend now that he has not understood my letter? This current mode of discussion, of always wanting to be the only one to "understand," is idiotic and inextricable. We ought to know that we are quite intelligent enough to understand everything. Only there are several of us, and we do not feel in the same fashion.

It has taken time for me to get used to my name as a literary signature. Now I like it well enough—a name in black and white.

Mme. Duclaux told me that Lenéru meant Lenoir. Reading "Mademoiselle Lenéru" in the papers reminds me of the good tradespeople in Brest, and the time when I believed myself a little girl known to everybody in town, because I heard my name spoken in the crowds by my grandfather's old sailors.

The great secret of my calm and my patience is the fact that I expect more of myself than of events, and that I know just about how much time I shall need. Time measured by the cure of my eyes, or at least the maddeningly slow return of my sight. I know that I am not I, that I shall not be myself for a year or two yet; but what is a year or two when one has already traversed twenty-three of them . . . ? Every month, watching myself in the glass, I recognize myself a little more. The mouths become animated, seem to speak louder and less quickly. That day, and that day only, when I recover my speech,[1] when I recognize my childish eyes, glory will be worth the trouble—glory and perhaps something else . . . before then, *never*. I seek a revenge, not a consolation.

*May 6*

They do not yet understand that I am not a woman. I alone perhaps succeed in realizing the notion of the impossible. Gregh said to me once:

[1] Read "conversation." At no moment of her life was Marie Lenéru dumb. Her deafness alone often obliged her to remain silent. F. C.

"Everything will come to you." On the condition that I go halfway to meet it, yes, that it is I who go to everything, on the condition that it is I who triumph over the physical barrier, yes. However charming, however thrilling I may be, whatever the prestige of "glory," no one will break through the circumstances. I am not speaking of the coarse, common advances of the unknown. I have felt very clearly that people are curious concerning me; but laziness and timidity are two insurmountable obstacles. Also I wonder if it would be worth while for me to take more trouble than the others, if the heart-rending effort I have to make would not separate me forever from those who will have left me to make it alone. . . . What good is it to prepare for a man the woman I may be? Should I have the incredible humility to summon him to victory, when I am left today to flounder about in the impossible and in *tours de force?* I am tired to the point of shutting my eyes, of wanting only to sleep and to die.

Evenings when we have talked of music, I cannot no longer go to sleep. In connection with an air from *La Surprise* which I played as a child, and which some orchestra or an other had just performed, Mama sought, without finding it, the *Moonlight Sonata;* then, with the accompaniment, I played it on the table. She recognized it from the first bars. She recalled the programme of the Chapelle de la Marine. M. Chic, who sent me some

airs from this poor *Redoutable*, played the *Symphonie de la Reine* at the Introït; and, during Mass, Niedermeyer's *Lac*, played by that excellent "naval band," succeeded, by some miracle, in seeming religious. How is it I have not forgotten the sailor who took your cards at the entrance? And the great red curtain before the window of the gallery? There were placards in the staircase by which you went up to it: "Silence in the house of the Very High." Then I see myself again, looked after, as usual, by the sailors who aided the beadles, in the procession, waiting before the portal, on the carpet between the chains and the posts set in a semi-circle, the day of Albert d'Auriac's marriage. It is a long time since the Chapelle de la Marine has ceased to exist, except as a Sainte Chapelle, without Red Mass.[1]

*Neuilly, June 1*

How is it possible not to suspect pro-Dreyfus susceptibilities in the affair of *Le Redoutable*, when Mme. Duclaux—Mme. Duclaux!—says to me: "There is an austere sincerity in the preface which is lacking in the play."

Spent two hours yesterday between Curel and Mme. Duclaux. Neither likes *La Triomphatrice*. Mme. Duclaux calls her "that tigress." At which I remark: "But, Madame, it is she who is de-

[1] Mass of the Holy Ghost, called Red Mass because celebrated with red ornaments on the reassembling of sovereign, or supreme, courts, whose members also wear red robes. Tr.

voured." Mme. D. . . . is interested in the daughter, and asks me seriously: "Whom are you for?" In *Les Affranchis*, also, it was Marthe who stirred pity. I have daily demonstration of the fact that a character is understood only if there are literary precedents for it. Especially the critics whose memory is stuffed with recollections, and who are born classifiers. For them it would hardly be necessary to alter Plato's saying: "To understand is to remember." Mme. Duclaux said to me that she could see this play with the following motto taken from the Gospel: "You can not put new wine into old bottles." I shall doubtless adopt Vigny's saying: "And yet, O Lord, I am not happy."

When I meet François de Curel again, he is protective and almost affectionate, so alert, when Mme. Duclaux translates what he has just said. He does not like *La Triomphatrice!* "She must not give that at any price, *even for her own sake*. The subject is dangerous, risky." He becomes excited in so friendly a fashion. He does not admit Sorrèze's emotion over a young man's article. I pointed out that it was a matter of the defection of a disciple: "If Tharaud wrote an article against Barrès, Barrès would naturally suffer from it. And if I wrote blasphemies against you, would that, then, leave you indifferent?"

He laughed: "Have you read my article on Binet-Valmer?" "Yes, and if I had not said to myself that he had surely asked you for it, I should have been fairly jealous."

"Then you have seen how severe I am for manuscripts?"

"You have made Binet-Valmer cry, and you will not be happy until you have begun again. . . ."

"I believe now, since you wish to provoke me to some profession of faith, that the drama of ideas should not be considered as a thing apart. It is really shameful that this has been done. There is the intelligent drama as opposed to the stupid theatre. Ideas are only a manner of lighting up the recesses of everything not ideas. Our profound motives for acting and feeling, which are called ideas, only bind us more closely to action and sentiments, whether it is question of living or of writing."

(Reply to a letter from Paul Lombard.)

It has so often been said that *Le Redoutable* was summary, and I said it too, but now it is time to stop. *Le Redoutable* is essentially a short play, and one without side developments. Compared with the way in which the other plays are treated, it is longer in scenes contributing directly to the development of the action; and, in these scenes, it is longer in speeches developing and probing the subject—richer, in short, in white corpuscles. Take from a modern play all side developments, the unnecessary introductions, the scenes between minor characters, the significant speeches, and you

have a drama treated at not a quarter the length of *Le Redoutable.*

*Ermitage*

To Hadaly . . . "Do you know that, before my departure, I made the acquaintance of Mme. de Noailles? She has the air of an eagle, the air of being what she is. Her eyes, her hair over the eyes, her nose—all is there.

"I was charmed . . . far less terrifying than I feared . . . Andrée will tell you of her sensational entry."

*Bonne*

In all these women, so avid of pleasure, an excursion, a spectacle, I feel a mad rush of enjoyment which disgusts me. Is it the education, the atavistic instinct to yield one's place? Is it religious ascetism, the acquired superiority of renouncement? May it be, finally, an instinct peculiar to me . . . to me and to Robespierre: the disinterestedness of those who want to seize everything at once?

To Mlle. D . . . after her article in the *Gazette de Lausanne:* "Now, after having expressed my gratitude to you, may I dare to rebel against your last words? We should be incapable of writing a line without the aid of the ear? A writer like you cannot be ignorant regarding this; and, to hear our sentences, do we need, as Flaubert said, to "bawl them aloud"?

The sense of rhythm does not reside in the

tympanum. Otherwise Beethoven would have been unable to think a measure after he became deaf. Do you believe that I am never shocked by the lack of ear in writers who hear perfectly? I claim responsibility for my rhythms, like any one of my fellow-writers. All my speeches are written to be *said*. The one thing for which I cannot respond is the stage control, the diction of any given interpreter.

*To Maeterlinck*

"Monsieur, I have already told you my emotion at finding something of mine in a book of yours. Today, I have to thank you for having been good enough to send me the volume and to add to it a few words too beautiful for me to dare even to thank you for them; and since I have this cruel honor of having been taken a little apart and of representing those who think of death what should not be thought of it, I want very much to be brave and to tell you just how glacial your admirable book has seemed to me. Is it indeed you who offer us this dream of pure intellectuality, and who continue relentlessly with this terrifying metaphysical disdain? Oh! I do not ask you to save it for us from shipwreck, but that you should not prefer it to everything else. . . .

"As for me, you have attached me to it again desperately. As I read you, Monsieur, and admired this homage so serenely offered to whatever is

human, whatever is infinite, I was, forgive me for saying so, conscious of an invincible dissent. It seemed to me that the most precious thing was that which you lost, that the human miracle outweighed the other, that the conscious, the "finite," was perhaps the sole miracle in this world which was without beginning or end. And it is not only in myself, but in others, that I cannot consent to this death of personality. All your infinite is depopulated by it. It is a worse solitude than that which turned Pascal's brain. I confess that the music and the dance of the spheres would console me for nothing. There is truly nothing more human in impersonal immortality than all the "ineffable" and philosophic joys of "knowledge" and of contemplation; nothingness for nothingness, I resign myself to the nearest—to that which remains warmest with the human presence. Let me at least fall asleep in my memories and in my agonies, in the intimacy of terrestrial things, and may neither God nor the infinite ever awake me to forgetfulness of what was myself, or interpose an ecstasy between my consciousness and me.

"Alas! it is not yet wisdom . . . and this is a decidedly indifferent manner of expressing a gratitude so real that perhaps this avowal, this regret for ourselves, which you believe will survive me, will be for me one of those revenges which calm us and put us to sleep at the hour of the night when we are not sleepy."

*April 17*

I have just been so gripped by a book, that I have not been able to tear myself from it. Something inconceivable, for I take up and I drop masterpieces like a fan. It is well worth while being able to judge the value of a work to the carat, in order to be stirred only by one from which talent is evidently absent.

They are the letters written by Lieutenant Colonel Moll to his fiancée, which have moved me, aroused me, filled me with enthusiasm to the inward state of tears. At last, here is life, here is love, with their true visages. Here is man such as he should be loved, from whom it is possible to accept love, and not that poor bookish, dramatic thing, tugged about, eternally repeated in our novels, our plays and our poems. Oh! the Parisian mistress and lover. . . . Is there one of us, still out of the running, who is tempted to begin again the gestures and the make-believes?

But this . . . how simple it is in its emphasis—clumsy, yet so little ridiculous. One is seized by the truth, the clean sweep of the factitious, as at a death-bed.

Here is love, human need. It is not love as a luxury, it is love as a necessity, as undeniable as the bread of the poor. Ah! it is not Châteaubriand's love, Musset's, or Mme. de Noailles'. O my great brethren, what an absence of prestige your sentiments have always held for me. . . . This is the love

which is not joked about. Is this inability to accept man deprived of certain gifts, and even of certain properly military functions, atavism in me, is it acuteness of the critical eseuse? Whose is this admirable definition of the hero: he who has given the most arresting formula of the concrete, living man?

A man who does not ride horseback, who has not handled arms, who has not commanded on a battle-field, who has not supported military fatigue body and soul, in whose eyes there is not the poignant seriousness, that inimitable simplicity of him who has seen men die, will, if he have the slightest elevation of soul, always feel a certain envy for his soldier brothers. An admirable portrait by Detaille opens the book. The painter has understood the gravity, the emotion of heroism. No display, no provocation in the attitude of the blacks and of their chief dismounting from his horse, but that air of distension, of holding one's breath and, at the same time, that *extra-social* humanity which chiefs contract in the habit of loving and esteeming outside of their own caste.

Marvellous career! Supreme commander over a "territory" larger than France, where everything is to be done, to be created, beginning with the mail service—"the influence of love on postal communications" —roads, fairs, cotton industry, ostrich park, racial politics, the rendering of justice at the door of his tent, like a Louis IX in the Crusades.

All the peoples flocking towards us: *ana madeleum*, I am oppressed. To travel for months, to know every hour of the day and night on horseback, at the head of your guards and of your following camels. When you have a healthy wish for a good gallop, to turn your head and see the rays of the rising sun lighting up your tricoloured guidon.

But it is not without a sentiment of dispossession that I admire this work of the colonials. I do not forget that, in my grandfather's, and even in my father's time, the colonies were under the jurisdiction of the navy. The admirals were their governors, after having been their conquerors. When grandfather commanded the Atlantic station, he commanded Africa; but the colonies were then coasts and islands. . . .

I come back to Moll, fiancé. Is it not more thrilling than anything else in the world to say to a woman: "I am going to send you copies of all the orders and of all the instructions which I shall issue. I always act with the same coquetry as if you were present."

Certainly what touches him, what arouses him most, is the love-friendship, the love-marriage, which needs no passionate acrobacy in order to endure, but simply the spur of a fine existence. He tells her squarely that love would not suffice him; but he tells her too that, if he has wanted something else, "it is so as to merit a first place at the love-banquet." But what a fine noviciate such

a separation is. One is moved by an awaiting which is so worthy, so vibrant, but not one word of which ceases to be watched—a respect, a virile reserve, not a theatrical cry. It is already a conjugal simplicity. A good realistic impatience in the anxiety and the minute particulars concerning the dates of the mails.

I fancy that there is a woman who has done with happiness. . . .

Is it wrong to think that this hard betrothal and the cruelty of the end were yet the best life had to give her and, above all, is it true? What would Colonel Moll's marriage have been?

*April 21*

Mme. D. . . . said to me yesterday that, in sum, all these plays come back to the same subject: the superiority of the individual over his environment. There is, indeed, quite enough matter in them to supply a whole school of drama; for combinations are always infinite, and the superior individual is what is generally missed by the writers who do not, themselves, belong to that category. But I do not find this in my plays. Evidently an organized work has many points of view and many contacts with other "square" works —that is to say, which face on all four sides.

It may be said that, in *Les Affranchis*, Philippe is superior to his environment; but the drama is not between him and his environment. On the con-

trary, there is drama because, between Hélène and him, there is equivalence. The play is: what must become of him? In *La Triomphatrice*, equally, the environment is a backdrop: the drama lies in the excessive equivalence of a man and a woman—in the superiority of the sanctions and of the realizations, perhaps, in the case of the woman; but I have been careful to indicate that this is the outside and the setting, that neither of the two partners attaches an immoderate importance to it. There is drama because the man does not excel. In *Le Mahdi*, the superiority this time is unconscious, hero and environment are in harmony. The woman alone is found to have nothing to gain by this apotheosis of the man. If we judge these plays from the "superiority" standpoint, there we have, in my opinion, their relations and their differences; but their "subject," their action, their "idea" are quite other, and the relations of which I have just spoken are seen by me afterwards only. In *Les Affranchis* I had the nostalgia of morality. In *La Triomphatrice* I saw love between equals—between absolute equals, to the point of social sanctions, that is to say, between rivals. In *Le Mahdi*, finally, heroism pure and simple, the exceptional greatness of a man and his relations, not with his environment, but with love.

Speaking of my plays, I must write here the order of their sequence, for I might easily forget it, never having dated them; and although I have rarely

found it necessary to speak of them here, they are also landmarks of my existence.

*Les Affranchis.*

*Les Lutteurs*—based on a novel written before—*Les Affranchis.*

*La Maison sur le Roc.*

*Le Redoutable*—when the public's preoccupation become evident.

*Le Bonheur des Autres.*

*Le Mahdi.*

You are my witness, Lord, that I have not chosen this career, that I have never taken much stock in it, that it always seems to me a little ridiculous, and that I had eight days of dejection after Moll's letters, something which has never, never happened to me on reading the history of my fellow-writers; and Carlyle's letters to Jane, for example, compared to this correspondence, appear to me very naively, very . . . foolishly, very clumsily priggish. So strong is atavism doubtless, and so true is it, above all, that life is too lovely for any of it to be lost, and that it is traversed by all those careers which demand the whole man: a body, a character, a brain.

To M. Allemand . . . "My African has been sketched for a long time. There remains only to decide upon the action, to find the kind of movement which can be combined with a significance."

*Abbaye de Pomier, Sept. 7*

## 1913

*Paris, October 2, 1913*

François de Curel is my master, not only because it pleases me, but because it is he, and he alone, who gave me the fillip. Had I not read his plays, nothing would have started. He gave me the fillip and he gave me the tone. I lay claim to this family air; this "cold ardour," more ardent and keener in me, comes from the fine virile bearing, sober to the point of irony, acute to the point of sarcasm, which found such an echo in me when I read *L'Invitée* and *Le Repas du Lion*. Before him, I had not that resonance. At 15, I was the literary daughter of Père Lacordaire; at 25, of Saint-Just and Barrès; at 30, finally, I was no longer mistaken.

I owe nothing to Ibsen, for whom I have little admiration. I consider him, because of his obsessing moralism, a popular author, somewhat in the style of Dumas *fils*. It is another morality, that is all, and the prefaces are by Comte Prozor. As soon as Ibsen ceases to preach—and what he preaches is always the same—he is execrable, see *Hedda Gabler*. His tragedy lacks novelty, finesse. It is intellectual melodrama. He exists, moreover, only by moments. The play, as a whole, is always lagging, diffuse, verbose, composed of ethical conversations and very commonplace ethics. The entrances and exits are repeated and confused, as in the work of a beginner. Sometimes there is in him

a tone which pleases me, which has calm. All the Scandinavian environment—the house, the cold, the fjords, and even the proper names—enchants me and creates an illusion. He rarely has enough measure to create truthfully and not change a character. When he succeeds in so doing, the result is poignant and delicious, like the woman and the child who are all that is good in *The Wild Duck*.

Far as I am from everything and, as it were, at astronomic distances, yet I approach . . . only I shall arrive *perinde ac cadaver* in that coma of expectation which you have perhaps known after waiting three hours in the reception-room of a specialist. And it would take a long, long time—a slow accumulation—to arouse me from it—years of tongue traction, and something behind me—another past which envelops and keeps guard.

*December 7*

And, to be entirely sincere, there is however something indomitable, a certainty of obtaining everything from one's self, which is almost already the gift. I have never doubted that I would give life the visage which I wanted to see it wear. If you knew the preciseness of my expectation and of my aims: I shall go there, there and there. Only that cannot be said: "There are designs which speech could not express and whose possibility execution alone can demonstrate."

## 1914–1915

*Neuilly, March 30, 1914*

Before this daily shrug of the shoulders, this non-acceptance of your existence, to remind your self, however, that there is nothing, either at right or at left, which you can want. No one possesses the life which I need. Neither man nor woman withholds what I lack.

I have known too much boredom, I know too well what an existence can lack, to accept the least restriction. . . . I need movement, the movement of travel and of sport—perhaps that of the society which I should have so much loved. . . . You will have derived small benefit from books, if they have not taught you to love everything else. It is their natural mission, and it is simply astonishing that it can be disregarded. And then bear in mind that I have to replace the void left by music. Now, as I have had my fill of solitude, and as all conversation tires me, I suppose I must read lips. If the method is deemed good—that is to say if, after half an hour's tête-a-tête with the most distinguished and seductive friends, I am not taken with a wild desire to go away, to run or to stretch out in a dark room, and to close my eyes, taking deep-breathing exercises—then it is that I shall be able to become a social being once more, with all the accessories which that implies, then it is that

you will be able to love me—you whom I did not believe yet "moulded." For, however awaited, however desired you may be, you will never be my whole life, you will not suffice, you alone, to preserve me from the past. And this frightful past, the past which would have killed any other woman, has so worked on my heart, has made me so strong, so free and so sincere that, in spite of that great appeal which we shall never conquer, I no longer know whether I should be able to deliver myself to you, O Love, to confide myself entirely to your keeping.

But the friendship which I prefer to everything else—affection, tenderness—still remains the best in love. I love regrets better than remorse, a sentiment of forfeiture, *not copying other people's love.* I love better the regret which suffers, the regret which doubts, even the regret which always trembles a little to make of a human thing the unknown.

M . . . asks me to explain my play to him . . . and, in response to my interpretations: "Well, you should say that." Ah! no, I shall not say it! It is not necessary for my play that you shall fall exactly upon that interpretation. I myself, while writing it, did not think of it at all. And it is extremely important for my play that it should contain no definition and explanation of itself. It should be self-sufficient. If I need to underscore my meaning with indications: "Here, there is a forest," it has

missed fire. There is no need of a phrase which hunts along with the character, at his side. "But," you will say, "no one will understand." . . . But, pray, what do you want to understand? There is no "word," my play is not a charade. I tell you a story which hangs together well, I speak good French—that is all the clearness I owe you. What I think of the business is none of your concern. I have said it nowhere, and it is that which disconcerts you. I create an atmosphere: React as you wish, or rather, as you can. A profound work is not a problem to solve, or perhaps even to pose; and, believe me, the play is no obscurer than the sun, unless it be in the final justification of its purposes, which the author has not declared to you, and which do not prevent the sun from shining. "Yes, but when you explain to me, I understand." That is all very well; but remember that the telescope should be pointed from without, and that it is not for the sun to magnify its own effects, and to launch into discourses to make itself better seen and understood. The work ought to be at its author's point. If one adopted the point of each spectator, his neighbours would never be satisfied, and the play would become shapeless and chameleonlike, as well as interminable. An author who has heard his play judged, knows something about this. There is no "universal consent." One must have the courage to betray one's self, to give a hold. It is impossible to answer every demand, save in very

narrow limits. I know perfectly well that the phrases which slight my heroes, by which I cause them to be judged from a lower level, will be taken literally. And because Denise said: "My mother is too personal," my poor victress (*triomphatrice*) is deemed by my most benevolent friends: "an hypertrophie of the ego." Whereas the reproach which I merit is having made too great and too magnanimous this woman who despises her glory so passionately, and who, in all the speeches, throughout the play, sees only her daughter and her lover. If I had given Denise a mean and ridiculous scene against her mother, they would have understood; but never shall I accord that easy means of diminishing the adversary and of falsifying the verisimilitude of the relations, which consists, precisely, in a certain plausibility, in a certain necessity for the misunderstanding. But does not the fact that, from the start, they take the lower point of view and the lower side, prove that it is time for my plays to arrive in order to avenge humanity, at last, from above?

I see a *situation*, several scenes which place my characters in a good grapple; and if, little by little, this situation becomes a problem, it is because it organizes itself in me and develops with that care for equilibrium which, in literature, is the very law of life. The formulas which appear to you the points of departure and the piles of the play, come last. They are born of the dialogue gradually, as this is

written. The "I do not know" of *Les Affranchis*, this "last word," for the sake of which, said a critic, I wrote the whole play, was born of an accord. It was almost invisible in a scene of the fourth act. When I suppressed the act, I saw it was necessary to keep the word and make it tell. But, for example, if the play ought not interpret itself, if it ought, like the pest, to avoid hearing itself think—see what is written by the young men who produce dramas of ideas—take yourself in hand, once the work is finished and, if it is possible, before the play is staged: Explain, explain, should you have to work at it like a stranger. Put up your sign-boards: "Here, there is a forest."

You will never be able to make too many of them. You will never make enough. It is not that other people are stupid; but, after all, the one most interested in understanding an author, remains the author himself. And he has this infinite advantage over the critics, that he is generally less a man of letters, less surcharged with readings and with literary reminiscences. Moreover, having to free and to defend his own personality, he is, by condition, less superstitious, less overawed by prejudices and precedents—even when his ignorance would not suffice to preserve him from them. He is nearer the direct impression—that impression which it is almost impossible to obtain from a literary head.

I repeat, an author must give the *la*. He will not lose his time. He will see the fine variations served

him on this *la*. They are only lazy, not in judging, not in praising even, *but in inventing their judgment.*

As for *Le Redoutable*, all the harm has come from me. Not only have I been unwilling to say anything about the play to the papers, but I have boasted of having written it for the public. You may imagine that they were not going to repeat what you said! And the well-intentioned, the fervent supporters of your pure art, those who say to you: "Come, make no more concessions," why, I beg you, then, rewrite, *Le Redoutable* in your own fashion

. . . .

## DURING THE WAR

"There is nothing to do for it, and there is nothing to say. The soldier measures the quantity of earth where a language is spoken, where manners reign, a spirit, a soul, a cult, a race. The soldier measures the quantity of earth where a soul can breathe. The soldier measures the quantity of earth where a people does not die. It is the soldier who measures the quantity of temporal earth, which is the same as the spiritual earth and as the intellectual earth. The legionary, the heavy soldier, has measured the earth by what has been improperly called the Virgilian sweetness, and which is the profoundest melancholy." Péguy

*Sept. 9*

While the great battle is raging, how needful to see such feeling displayed! X. . . . speaks mysteriously. "Last Monday, it was going very badly. They did not tell the public so." Letters always have this tone. From the beginning we counted on nothing—neither on ourselves, nor on the Russians. Yet the final victory was anticipated: Why? The famine in Germany. How glorious it is! This pessimism is made up of so many things which I do not like. Fear, in the first place. Then, as they know no more than I how dearly we shall pay the victory, they want it understood that they had no illusions and that they had foreseen what is happening. Only, as, after all, things may take a better turn, X. . . . even prefers to have his letters as little talked about as possible. Finally, *last and not least*,[1] they are not militarists, and they would rather a thousand times owe the victory to famine than to our armies and our generals.

. . . How temperament and education are always at the bottom of things! What terror at the thought of being too optimistic, of having appeared too confident. . . . How vanity is always the first to be served!

Ah! since it is necessary to belong to a caste, let it be above, with the aristocrats and those who are envied, with those who believe in themselves, should you be obliged to prove to them tomorrow

[1] English in the original. Tr.

that they were mistaken. Let it be with you, officers, non-commissioned officers and soldiers, you who have been so cruelly tried, and from whom fortifying news alone emanates.

*Neuilly, December*

Bourget, in the *Echo de Paris*, renews Pascal's reasoning which has already so struck me, if I dare say so, by its inconsequentiality, by all that it eliminates and all that it takes for granted without knowing it. "Either there is a God, or there is not one." It is individuality such as a believer alone can picture it.

To Madame D. . . .

"Oh! Madame, how can you believe that a thing as artificial as modern war should be accepted as an ineluctable possibility? What seems to me most dispiriting in it all, is precisely the gratuitousness of the cataclysm, unless it be this parrot-like phrase, expression of our resignation: 'So long as there are men,' etc. . . .

"Or then, if you believe in the fatality of the human vice of war, why seek responsibilities? Be mystic all the way. The truth is there has not been a war in Europe for 500 years, which very little in the brain of one man, or of several men, would not have sufficed to avoid. An old diplomatic routine—that is what war is today. Murder is in human nature. Yes, but not murder without pleasure. This is well known by governments,

which have had to take numerous coercive measures to render military service obligatory.

"What is distressing among us is that pacifism has been made a synonym of anti-militarism. What I shall regret in the war is the soldier. But to consider it 'Utopian' that governments—I do not say the men whose opinion is not asked—should cease settling their conflicts by a means which is so widely expensive and which, moreover, is only a chance solution and leaves the conflict undecided—for this one must have the need of war firmly implanted.

"The Wilsons and the Winston Churchills, who know their personal responsibility in the declaration or non-declaration of a war, do not find it Utopian to be pacifists. No reform of human nature is involved!

"Pardon me, but it is my sacred anger for the moment at seeing the most complicated, the most artificial, the most costly, and the most useless mechanism of modern politics confounded with a human necessity."

*December 27*

She is very good, which permits her to find everybody bad.

To Mme. D . . . "Two outstanding wishes: victory to the limit, and that this may never occur again. Oh! the precautions . . . to save some of its seed! I no longer want to write except against war; for no action is possible, after all, save through

opinion. Let us age the idea of war, since there are those who work to rejuvenate it. That undertaking, all told, was already well advanced. It is that which renders this war so cruel. . . ."

To M. Billotte. "I dare not say that it is so fine a thing to have fallen at Eparges. I had read the account of this feat, holding back sobs of admiration. I cut it out of the paper to have it always in the books I reread. I shall write your son's name on it. Glory, immortality, are memory in the hearts that survive, the love of the living for the dead.

"Your sons and their fellows will have made death so beautiful that they will have taught remorse, shame for life without risk. Ah! if that could console us, doubt not that they who are dead thus will not be forgotten. 'The voice of an entire people lulls them in their tombs.' All the relations of life and death have changed at present. Those who are forgotten, who are sacrificed, are the living. Shall we ever be able to love them as we love the others?"

After all, it is in this copy-book that I shall keep the account of Eparges; and, if I copy certain lines of my correspondence, which have not even the value of literary notes, it is so that I may forget nothing, not a heart-beat for you, O you who are dead for my country, to whom I want to dedicate my greatest effort, my greatest work, a play of which I know nothing as yet, unless it be that it

will be called *La Paix,* and that I approach it, that I am preparing myself for it, religiously, as if for a vocation; for it must have an influence. It is not as an artist that I want to exploit the catastrophe. . . . Since I have had this bitter disappointment at not being able to perform my woman's task by your beds of suffering, I shall work to keep you from being massacred in the future. "My son and my soldier."

To Marie G. . . . "You see, Marie, it might be said that a convent gown has fallen on our shoulders. It is felt that something must be changed in existence in order to have a reason for keeping it when it is taken from so many others. Never shall I, who am so free, console myself for not having been able to tend, or merely to serve and amuse, our wounded soldiers. It is like being kept away from the death-bed of a cherished being. They are so admirable that it is hard to say which makes us want to cry the more, admiration or horror. Yet it had not occurred to me to write to them and to take a *'filleul.'* And now here is one who asks me to do so. Evidently, since he addresses himself to me, he is a man of culture. But, like all our fellows at the front who write to Barrès, one feels that, since they may disappear, they seek a witness who will save something of their name, will give them an hour's survival and, finally, will make of their glory something other than a solemn forgetfulness. Is it not heart-rending?

"There are some among them whom these events excite. They would end by boring me, if one did not deem it a duty to be at all hours with those who are fighting.

"All political life, whether or not it relies upon war, appears to me today so artificial, conventional and superstitious, that it is like a fallen stage-setting. There should not have been sacrificed to myth, 'a collectivity,' the one reality in the world: individuals; and, to think that, without remarking its gratuitousness, politicians should have been left to play at the *raison d'état* and, above all, oh! above all, that business of being first in the world, to which we owe today's massacres. O metaphysical middle class, 'to maintain our rank as a world power.' Read Prince von Bulow, read the Austrian manifesto—July 30, I believe—you will find nothing in it except that it is necessary 'to maintain in the world our rank as a great power.' . . . That is to say, to obtain in commercial treaties concerning cheap truck and groceries, 'the rôle of the most favored nation.'

"Infatuation of diplomats who deem that the successes or failures of their speciality are affairs involving national honor! Herr von Bulow complained that the Germans were not sufficiently interested in world politics—that is, in his game of chess. O prince of goldsmiths!"

"Admirable epoch which one can accept having seen on condition that it is never repeated. May it be a supreme luxury of our humanity, but may

never a soul consent to see it twice!" To Renée de V . . .

To M. de Curel. "It is Robert d'Humières who has fallen now. With what exclusive admiration we had talked of you! I weep for the young men. What hearts will remain for us to thrill, what hearts will still beat for us after this discouraging consummation of death? And yet we must keep on, remain this little parcel of France constituted by our activity, give ourselves a pretext for living, a reason for preserving what is taken from so many others. There are moments when I want to go and shut myself up in a cartridge factory, as in a convent."

*June 7*

To Jean. "You are fortunate to be a witness of this magnificent epoch. It will influence you all your life, and will communicate its energy to you when the day, still distant, comes to struggle in a very different direction, and to oppose our will, as if it depended upon us alone, to the possibility of such a thing occurring twice on earth. Admirable luxury of devotion, but one which we must, in the future, oppose by means of the severest sumptuary laws."

*June 11*

To Mme. D . . . "I have happened, in Péguy's *Notre Patrie*, on so perfect a reflection relative to Combes: 'It is demonstrated today that a man can,

with impunity, exercise a pitiless Caesarism in the Republic, provided he is not good-looking, is not a soldier, wears even his civilian clothes badly—above all, cannot ride horseback.'

"As far as it is possible to remember contemporary plays, it seems to me that our stage swarms with civilian *coups d'Etat*. Only the seditious side was not perceived. In this world, then, prestige alone is genuine. There is danger only where love begins, whether of women or of crowds. Speaking of *Mahdi*."

To Mme. Dus. "I admire with all my heart, but I am not resigned; and, if I accept, for the period of this war, it will be completely finished afterwards. I shall not even discuss any longer. The nurse who watches over a gravely wounded soldier, does not ask herself if his cure is Utopian, whether it is finer for man to be a martyr. She knows she must cure him, and gives her life to that end.

"I have much hope in the Socialist party. Its last manifesto is excellent. They accept this war entirely; but, like the English Socialists, like the American Pacifists, they demand of Peace that famous international power of compulsion. Now they hold the reins, in France and in England. Those who view the future in the past will learn, perhaps, before dying, by what measures, of the most positive sort, and resembling all laws which men have voted until now, will be realized one

Utopia—possibly several, even. . . . I liked very much Barrès' article, Friday, on the *overwhelming rapidity* with which this war is exhausting the possibilities of a European war."

To M. "Henry James (*Book of France*[1]) is hard to read, but moving when understood. In the grip of these emotions, one wonders whether they are not worth what they cost, and it is necessary to react quickly against this enthusiasm of sacrifice, this seduction of death. Alas! what would men not do to deserve to be loved? Let us love them at a lesser price. This is what I would ask of that siren-like voice of Barrès' eloquence. Let your love be less tainted with fondness for flesh."

"You are certainly right, yet I am persuaded it is a Utopia." Ah! human timidity! men are afraid for their personal "judgment" and want, first of all, to assure its safety. They are perhaps even more afraid of "Utopia" than of war. It is necessary to proceed by way of authority, to show them that there is no more security for self-love on one side than on the other, whether they are for or against Utopia. For, in sum, they ignore war as a public event: contingent war. Because it is painful, it must be fatal. Take away the pain, and they would better understand the desuetude, the gratuitousness, the fantasticality of diplomatic and governmental machinery.

To Marie G. . . . apropos of the Book of France:

[1] Title in English. Tr.

"But, finally, heroism should not be passiveness, and war's absence of finality will never be sufficiently denounced. There is, among our intellectual leaders, a tendency to preach heroism for heroism's sake, which bears far too much the professional hall-mark: art for art."

What a frightful life of the feelings; but, after all, what a life! Here we have the most lukewarm, the most commonplace human attachments, transfigured by heroism and death. It is the sole aspect under which the sight of the war can almost be tolerated.

To Marie B. . . . "In politics, it is not enough to be right. You have to be sure that others will recognize it. Women have hurt their cause, and that of peace, by indulging in a useless, therefore slightly ridiculous, demonstration."

I believe, with Wells, that it is through a formidable campaign of opinion, carried on by all the means at its disposal—press, books, theatre—and not through the side discussions of congresses and committees, that results will be obtained. It is always the same law of success and the same error committed in literature: You want to succeed? *Start nothing to one side*, either little review, or little theatre. Lay hold of what exists, of the true fortresses of public opinion. A single man capable of making himself heard in a popular paper, would do more than thousands of delegates. The pacifists, who are only pacifists, will do little, like the

women who are only feminists. Be forces or tap forces. I persist in believing that women can accomplish far more through social influence, than by means of a single vote accorded to each. It is not his personal vote which constitutes the political authority of a man but, as Saint-Simon would say, the influence of his "intrinsic." The vote will certainly come and I shall not object to it; but it is not by dinning their demands that women will attain the level of distinguished men. The weak should avoid specializing in their weakness.

I receive papers and reviews of deaf-mutes which, instead of moving me, make me impatient. One would say that they can have no preoccupation of a normal man—nothing but the preoccupations and interests of deaf-mutes. It is very wrong to hypnotize them this way on their infirmity. The feminists papers infallibly remind me of these deaf-mute papers. How much more a distinguished woman economist, writing in economic reviews, could do for women and for peace today, than all these clamorous claims. What you cannot accomplish, O women, with a majority of women, accomplish, as active beings, forgetting a moment your sex, with a masculine majority. And I believe that the vote would come much more quickly in this fashion.

To Mme. D . . . "Romain Rolland absurd, a trite homily, full of commonplaces, does not perceive that the most tragic thing about this war

is that, precisely, *it is not a collective madness.* Where is the madness in all these poor heroic men who give their lives through duty? Old vice o anti-militarism. It is no more among the peoples than in the army that we ought to fight war. It is among all the non-combatants: Writers, diplomats, governors, financiers."

It is true that there is frightful mourning in France; but, in the presence of all that is taken from us, do you know what I think, O my brothers and my sisters? This: Ah, that there was, then, happiness to be lost in the world! No one is more struck by the crime and the sacrilege than I, no one feels them more rebelliously, O frail and precious human happiness—happiness dispensed to the throngs, happiness which I shall not have had.

*October 4*

Decidedly, with regard to the war, I can now read only soldiers and pacifists. From the rest I am always awaiting words which will never come. . . .

You who are eloquent, you who are moved, you who are elegiac, let us now occupy ourselves a little with the "fatality" of war. For, in the last analysis, what part do you play, O dilettantes of heroism and of death, if others, to whose band you will not belong, make it their business to prevent the recurrence of your fatalities, of your laws of history? This passiveness of intelligence in the

presence of war, the manner in which our artists will have reacted, this pure and simple exploitation of the fact by literature, is what will have most clearly demonstrated for me *humanum paucis vivit genus.*

In fifty years, the successors of all these folks will feed their talent with avenging ironies on the belief in general mobilizations, human necessities. But whence, then, do the initiators get their flame? I count much upon men of action. I found yesterday, in an article by Humbert concerning the financial agreement among the allies: "It is not the United States of Europe, but it is a step in that direction!" Well, well, well!

Larguier wounded? Tell him I salute this halo added to his fine talent, already so noble. Ah! our fellows distance us irremediably. We can never be sufficiently envious or humiliated. Yes, it is very exalting, magnificent, for those who have the right to see but that side. A right which belongs to combatants alone. . . . Thus, there are those who credit me with "illusions"? That hardly goes with my turn of mind, and I wonder where I can happen to have expressed any. It is not a cry of despair, but a cry of revolt that I have uttered. Only nobody ever reads a text. People look into their heads for what they are accustomed to think on the question.

I shall not fear war the day there are no more non-combatants to wage it. . . .

M. Sazonoff, in November 1915, demands a commercial treaty between France, England and Russia: "Without which this terrible war will have been fought in vain." What a confession of the nullity of military operations. A commercial treaty among *allies*, to give any sort of finality to the war!

To Puech. "No indeed, we are not alone. What should we do with beings of another race? We are there, that is enough, and our battle-fields are invisibly peopled with all the souls that are ours. You are more spoiled than the Homeric heroes and the pious knights of the Middle Ages. Instead of Minerva and Saint Michael, you have our souls of today, wrought, completed by centuries, more intelligent, more vibrant, more deeply moved. It is for them to give to all those who fall, through the fidelity and the transmission of memory, the sole immortality which is not a deception—that of human pain and love.

"How well I understand your gaze towards the future! It is not true that war is a school of asceticism. I believe that, nearer death, we learn to despise nothing in life. I am not, alas! a soldier, but I know well that war has cured me of many disdains."

*December 28*

To Henry Marx. "They are so ignorant as to these questions of war and peace—because, at bottom, so little impassioned by them!—that they

really imagine that, being a pacifist is, *ipso facto*, being a stupid, sentimental disarmist."

To H. "We are too weak, head and heart. We shall never derive from our revolt the 'cursing' which would be required."

To M. "I am so little a 'writer'—since that is the worst insult among writers! I relish personal sentiments only. If I have wanted talent, it was to be loved through my works, and not at all because of them."

To Rachilde. "I can accept the continuance of the horrible thing, for I understand the implacable necessity and I am of a military race; but that intelligences, hearts and wills should not react desperately to save the future from it—that they should not rebound under its absurdity—is perhaps what will have most edified me as to human inertia."

## 1916–1917–1918

To M. G. "As for me, I now admit but two races: soldiers and pacifists. The same thunderbolt which sends the first to heroism should, for the second, be a Damascene conversion—a revelation of all that was to be done and was not done."

*January 20, 1916*

To M. B . . . "My pacifism assumes savage proportions, not in the presence of the war—there is, alas! nothing to change in our attitude—but in

the presence of the scandalous indifference on the part of the witnesses and of those who are responsible. Every non-combatant who is not a mad devotee of pacifism, is one of these last."

To Mme. D . . . "I have read, with heavy heart, one of your beautiful articles—*A Chaplet of Heroes*.[1] Ah! the egotism of artists. The dear boys have thought only of themselves: it was the finest life and the finest death, and duty has come as they would have chosen it. They have been spoiled! But we must wrestle with the angel and rid ourselves of the terrible nostalgia. If war has so powerful a hold on our hearts, it is not because it flatters our vices and our appetites, but it will probably have been the highest human ideal, as it is also the most costly."

"The mistress quality for the moment is coolness, not enthusiasm. In general, the minutes preceding the attack are absolutely silent —gloomy even. The men merit a hearty sympathy rather than a sanctimonious admiration. Everyone does his duty here in a manner adapted to his temperament, and that is all. The effort is pretty nearly constant in all natures." Lucien Lobbé.

"I am haunted by the first killed whom I saw at my feet. During the tempest you pay less attention to it; but, when you reflect on it calmly, you know all its horror. Death, as it is conceived by philosophers —the liberation of the soul —is

[1] Title in English. Tr.

sublime; but a head bored by a bullet, a brain reduced to pulp, a corpse flooding a trench with blood, a faceless man rattling in his throat for two days. . . ."

To Puech. "I have read in some church or other, some sanctuary which I visited, this inscription: 'There is no holier place on all the earth.' I see this motto flaming over Verdun.

"Verdun overwhelms us with a steadfast hope, but we know again all the suffering of the first days—a little too forgotten, perhaps. Ah! should the right to live in France have cost us such a price? Life, now, in myself and in all those who are not with you, seems to me an ill-gained possession. Seeing the snow again in the morning, one thinks: 'Oh! Verdun.' You speak of those who have fallen. I do not believe that any woman in the midst of her family, fails to feel how much closer her heart is to the others. Ah! I pity those who are not at the front. But one would also like to do something to bring the others back."

*Monday, March 7*
*15th day of the battle*

To Mab . . . "When he said *au revoir* to me, in the heavy equipment of departure, and they told me to kiss him, he became so serious, so religious, that I was quite affected by it. What responsibility is ours, dear friend, in our role of semi-celestial beings for these little motherless heroes whom

France confides to us. . . . Looking at the frightful wrist-badge, I reflected that, with their comrades and their leaders—they, too, so ready to disappear—we are their sole witnesses, the sole anchor in memory for their good little lives offered so naturally. Thank you again for the Cobdens [1] which you sent me. Ah! God, to defend in our turn the children to whom their country has given nothing, and who write to me: 'I was born cheerful,' and not let them continue to be massacred for centuries of centuries."

To Puech. "Your letter came yesterday evening, and I want to answer it today. What a letter! I read it with horror and despair, and I have had it read, so that your lieutenants and your comrades may already be a little avenged by women's grief. It is their concrete hearts which should suffer and pay the abstract grief of France. Women's hearts after those of their brothers-in-arms! Now you are completely consecrated by contact with martyrs. I have *seen* with you, but the sight was more beautiful than terrible. That butchery of the dead bodies, so shocking, has been described to us, and we are not ignorant of it. But, it seems to me, horror renders more impassioned our transport towards our dead. The more they are torn, the more are we also. Not a wound is lost. With what affectionate piety I think ceaselessly of our dead!

[1] Reference to a campaign for free trade carried on in Paris during the war. Tr.

A living soldier still measures, despite the emotion, all the distance between man and woman; but fallen—fallen and butchered—there is no longer anything between them. He is a relic to be kissed, to be borne in her arms. Why have we not the strength to be yonder to aid you in this cruel service of the dead? This rôle of burier is one of your titles of nobility. I am touched that you have chosen me for your funeral watch. No, I am for nothing in the strength which has sustained you, I should not even want to aspire to it. In the name of what? What are we compared to you? We have but one mission, to encompass you, to send down to you in your dug-outs a little of your country's warmth. In its name, even without family title, we have the right to bend over you, to say to you that not one of your sufferings is lost, not only because of the salvation accomplished by it, but by virtue of all that it wrests from our hearts. But now that I know all that, you understand that you must give me a little more news of yourself, were it only an empty envelope every week, such as the Maréchal de Luxembourg sent to Jean-Jacques. . . . How happy I am at your lieutenant's action! I have so great a respect for these distinctions. We know what they represent. And, at the same time, you receive another of them, which proves that you are indeed of 'our corporation,' as Barrès says. The two go so well together! I am happy about this poem which I was the first to love.

"And now that they are talking to us of the coming formidable offensive, you can imagine what we feel. If, to the present emotion, must be added the joy of triumph, I believe I shall no longer be able to stand it. When war is dolorous, one stiffens for the struggle; but should triumphant war succeed to dolorous war, and should the second have been the price of the first, there will no longer be tears enough for such a joy. Happiness is worth what it costs. You will see that, when peace comes, we shall all be half mad. What a place our country will have! What prestige. . . . You are right, means will have to be found to be worthy of living in it. For you it will be a question of not declining: to have lived as you live, and to fall back again into every-day life. Ah! it is for this life that we shall need to be exacting and cruel. But I believe that you are preparing a happiness such as was not suspected in the past. Adieu, *mon filleul*, I am haunted by these dead and these dying whom you have borne. I kneel before them beside you. Salute their tombs for me. The most pious religion, the most caressing poetry, the human heart has been able to discover, sings in my memory. I bring them this burden of all souls:

"'La voix d'un peuple entier
Les berce en leurs tombeaux!'"[1]

To Madeleine. "I loved your parents who reared

[1] The voice of a whole people lulls them in their tombs. Victor Hugo. Tr.

me and I felt myself loved by them, much more than it is usual for a niece to feel it. The sole unshadowed part of my life is that which I passed in their house. There is not a day I do not see again that sunshine in the dining-room which brought us together—sunshine which bathed the port, the harbour, the château, the Pointe Espagnole, the lighthouse of Saint Anne, the Goulet. It is a tender, living, daily memory, and the more I see of life, the more I understand the superiority which was theirs, and of which you are so perfectly the inheritors. Thus, for me, my darlings, you too are *taboo*."

To M. S. "All you scientists and thinkers give me the impression of heretics. You discuss points of doctrine, but never, never the doctrine. You discuss the war, but never war. On every other point you have accustomed us to quite a different attitude. Religion and science—two such positive orders of facts!—you have made a question of everything. With regard to war alone you are believers, unless . . . unless you do not say all."

*March 27*

To Mme. D. . . . "In spite of Verdun's holding out, it is none the less a nightmare. I am told that we also have the flames, and that we have blinded 900 men. . . . To be a contemporary of that . . . and everyone appears so calm. Horror is only a little ripple on the surface."

To Lady Frazer. "I have hopes in your statesmen. Sir Edward Grey does not think that war is the best realistic and utilitarian policy. But the diplomats! They bear already the germ of future conflicts. . . ."

*June 4*

In the present war we still keep the attitude which was that of distinguished minds, under Louis XIV, with regard to God. It is the last dogma not yet touched by the critical spirit. All those writers who cannot get over the fact that, in the presence of war, the pacifists have remained pacifists. But it is precisely *because of the war* that it is question of being pacifist. And they are like the peasants who do not even succeed in hearing and reproducing in writing the sounds of French syllables. They talk "dream" and "illusion." The pacifist has less dream and illusion than you. It is because he has not the least confidence in your pacts and your peaces, that he demands something absolutely different. It is because he has no illusion as to your morrows, that he elaborates, not a dream, but a *programme;* and, as Norman Angell has said: "The more difficulties we encounter, the more our energies will thereby be exalted." It is time for you to become acquainted with strong-handed pacifism, instead of your effusions in garrulous books on "race wars" and "culture wars." Man's brain is inexhaustible when it comes to giving a sense to what has none. Yes, we are a very intelli-

gent animal, and history and politics are incomparable training-grounds for breaking in our minds. We end by becoming tired of facts—of the facts which always prove us right, and which confound our adversary. And that with as much truth on one side as on the other. Everything can be said. The most contradictory truths, "in the light of facts," become equally plausible, equally striking, let but a man of intelligence take a hand in the matter. Everything is optional here, and interchangeable. Thus I embark squarely for any port I like, in the fashion of Frederick II. There will always be enough historians, sociologists, politicians and economists to prove afterwards, when I have done what pleased me, that the "light of facts" and "the law of history" announced my success.

To M. S. . . . "With regard to free trade, I ask no more of it than what you tell me. The day it is clearly proved that war is a factitious world, without other end than itself, without the slightest practical utility in the presence of the realities of peace, the progress accomplished will already be enormous."

*June 16*

To Henriette. "I confess that these admirable dead seem to me more heart-rending than the others. Just now one wonders how one will be able survive. It is at once abominable and fortunate

that the capacity for suffering is so limited in this world. But also it is for these who understand, to suffer for the others, like our dear Saint Theresa, in order that the frightful debt of sorrow leagued us by battle-fields may be paid—a collective debt which it frightens us to see so lightly felt by those who are spared. In the presence of war they go no further than commonplace exclamations."

All are agreed, very well, "everybody wants peace," but it is not right to say: "The only difference is as to the choice of the means." It is not that: "There are those who want to organize definitive peace, and those who are convinced that it is Utopian." It is clear enough that it is not with such temperaments that we shall ever establish peace. Ah! when we see the different reactions to the common ordeal, how well we understand the difference of individual destinies.

Public opinion—what a vain expression so long as there are only individual opinions to interpret it!

To Puech. "I am inconsolable for what you tell me of the existence yonder; but, on the contrary, you must *tell me the worst*. It is our duty to suffer with you from afar. One suffers as one can! There is not a degree of indifference or acceptance with regard to the war which should not be pitilessly persecuted, by recalling so many unpardonable things. Really horror is only so slight a quiver on the surface! Could we live without that? And yet we live, or only too nearly."

*July 16, 1916*

To Marie B. . . . "Yes, a victory is needed in order to come cleanly out of this war. But aside from the re-establishment of Belgium and Serbia, the return of Alsace-Lorraine, and other analogous matters, I am indifferent to all peace conditions, called 'peace guarantees,' which appear to me quite as surely guarantees of war. It is never from a peace that can come *peace*. There is no victory which gives it. It depends upon quite another preparation, for which the diplomats have never given proofs of their ability, any more than the best brains among our contemporaries. They have not reached that point! And as for me, who wish hereafter to judge men from the point of view of peace only, in much the same way as Pascal judged from the point of view of God, I feel all the sacred wrath and all the rods of Jansenism pass into my hand."

*Le Trez-Hir, August 13*

To Marie G. . . . "O monstruous stupidity which endures, which is maintained in our modern times, through the sheer force of the stupid only. A mad, useless thing in which, by dint of being told over and over that it cannot get along without it, humanity has come to believe. Have you the patience to read the papers when they talk of 'war aims? ! ! !' "

To Aunt Gabrielle. "Reading . . . is harassing.

It is not that they are wrong. It is evident that, when peace comes, we must take whatever will make us stronger in the next war, even should that next war wrest it from us. But to call such things guarantees of peace! There is a truth of La Palice's which it would be good to scatter broadcast, to wit, that peace will be given us by pacifism only."

In an article on Yuen-Chekaï:

"During the last years of the dynasty, the business men, the bankers, the great munitions houses, of Europe and America had formed a vast project for the purpose of exploiting the wealth of that immense country. They had established a consortium composed of important banks in Germany, England, France and the United States. The diplomacy of these four powers approved and supported the scheme. The initial step was to have been the launching of a series of great loans so as to permit the militarization of China and the big orders for war-material which this meant."

It is the horror of war which dominates all; then, as man has always done in the presence of suffering, we mysticize the scourge. The greatest danger comes, perhaps, from the lyricism with which we always veil ourselves in the presence of gratuitous and "invented" death—Marx's expression. What revolts me and strikes me quite differently in war, is precisely the absence of that fatality which our verbal routine and so much inveterate lyricism obstinately indulge in.

What strikes me and what, even more than the horror, has rendered war intolerable to me—there is also much horror which we accept in nature—is the gratuitousness, the artificiality, the non-necessity of the scourge. And this, as ever in the world, coming perhaps uniquely from a verbal error. The highest discoveries always begin by a reform of the vocabulary. As long as we continue to speak of "unchained elements," there will evidently be nothing for us but to cross our arms. But, were it a question of a simple psychological study, a fastidious critic would shrug his shoulders and beg the writer to seek the exact term. What is a human element which is unchained under penalty of death? An element which obeys your laws would be perfectly obedient to mine.

. . . .

What revolts me in war is that I have not met a serious obstacle to combat, that this monster scourge is only a wind-mill, a sinister cross-purpose. Whose pleasure is being served here? I well know that there are tradesmen, and war profiteers; but, all the same, without the cross-purpose of the *raison d'état*, it is not for these that a decree of general mobilization would be signed. Everyone utters outcries in the presence of the fire, everyone sees his house burn, and all remain inactive because, by universal consent, it is said: "It is certain that water does not quench fire," and everybody has

remained awestruck by this evidence. I do not exaggerate. It is impossible to exaggerate here.

The reason why man is rarely a genius in the arts and sciences is absence of originality. His inability not to repeat others and not to believe what he repeats, still remains the strongest reason which militates in favor of "fatal war." It is not "human passion" which acts in this case. On the contrary, it is human inertia.

Change the starling's repertory, teach it to whistle peace instead of whistling war; perhaps you will be naïve enough to pretend that the bird has really evolved.

Perhaps someone will object that the obstacle, because ridiculous, is none the less enormous. This world's enormities lose many of their dimensions the moment we are resolved to strip away all verbal lyricism. Let us exaggerate nothing, not even our tasks. The work to be accomplished was less primordially necessary the day it occurred to some one to say: "If it is possible, it is done, if it is impossible, it will be done." The world is made to our measure. Let us be more simple, even when we attack the stoutest resistance of the species.

It is true that the exercise of an average will is still fairly rare in man. Let it be said once for all, *I am not speaking of the combatants.* The heroism expended by them is not in question, since I rebel, to the point of passion, to the point of agony, for the very reason that they are still obliged to expend

it. This being well established, there remain the difference among the reactions in the presence of war, the general submission of intelligence, and even the aesthetic exploitation of the martyrdom of others, the nothingness of effort in the presence of the unacceptable and the inadmissible. This opposition of fever and of shock to the resignation of the sage who deplores but can do nothing—these variable quantities of will—is, after all, what has best made me understand the difference of human destinies.

To Puech. "I do not like what you say to me of my letters. Letters are published after one's death, and no one will write for posterity less than I. I shrug my shoulders in the presence of those who write for it. I want to have talent for my contemporaries only, for those alone who are meant for me, whose eyes can meet mine, and whose heart I can feel beat. No, I decidedly do not believe in posterity—in its sanctions any more than in the satisfactions received from it!

"Posterity is dead for me, who will be dead for it."

To Mme. M. "I part company with you only in your despair as to possible action. I believe war, fatal war, like all things which have been fatal on earth, a false scarecrow. Think what we will of human nature and of the nature of the masses, it little matters! It is not of them that we run foul; the obstacle is less grandiose. Those who have been obliged to obey a war order, will obey a

peace order. Here it is a duel between those who direct, between the directing minorities whereby the human race lives. What several men have wanted, several others can, admirably, and without the least Utopia, cease to want. Everything depends upon the force, the authority, the mortal insistence of their *veto*. . . . Perhaps the task even should not be exaggerated. Let us be on our guard against mysticism in politics. Await the day when the intellectuals—following the lead of certain among them, evidently bolder—await the day when the intellectuals will dare to take a hand in it. It was the sole eventuality feared by Prince von Bülow with regard to socialism. 'Taste and fashion have not reached that point,' one of our ministers of foreign affairs said quite plainly. One fine day the open secret will be let out. Perhaps it is let out already, but no one would dare spread the news. Everything here is such *utter silliness*. It would be farcical, were it not enough to make us die of chagrin. Oh, Madame, I confess to you that, so far as I am concerned, outside of 'the obligation to war,' there is very little left in war. The 'taste for risk' is individual. It does not require general mobilization!"

To Alice L. "How I would like you to find a use for this high value of yours! For it is not enough to possess a first-rate intelligence, a superb culture and enough talent to find expression for both. The real difficulty with our literary careers is that it is not

enough to have the strength to pursue them, it is necessary, in addition, to invent them. I remember, from the start, feeling clearly what I should be capable of; but it seemed to me that I should never find a subject for a play or a novel. I envied the scientists who are sure of never wanting work for the morrow. Passing from one play to another, I still have this impression: 'There is not another subject for me.' I know now that it is an illusion. A writer finds his subjects in the same way in which he treats them—by wanting them, by seeking, by persisting. If it doesn't come today, it will come tomorrow. Perhaps we do not give ourselves talent; but, most certainly, we give ourselves our careers. We must not even exaggerate the effort required, as did Flaubert, most romantically. It is always over people like ourselves that we have to triumph in mind, in work, in talent. . ."

To Mme. Mardrus. "We should, I believe, refrain from praising an artist for feeling like everyone else in a common ordeal, while, in the common ordeal of personal life, they are so capable of feeling more than anyone else, with a keenness which is called 'originality,' but which, for me, is the great test of degree and of quality, the real life of emotion."

To Rachilde. "These criminal whirligigs speak of 'human passions'; but where are the human passions in this race for heroism and for universal sacrifice? And the sacrilegious conclusion which

they draw from this heart-rending martyrdom, is that 'man is a wolf for man!' "

*November 27*

To M. de F . . . "As for peace, dear friend, I wonder how I should express myself in order to be understood, and I should be deeply revolted by such a misunderstanding of pacifism, of war, and of men in their presence of war on the part of a Christian prelate, did I not know his mission in this world to be other than that of thinking. Pacifism has never meant disarming *in presence of the aggressor*, which would be suicidal, but disarming the aggressor. As for speaking of human passions in a war like ours, that is a veritable crime of high treason against heroism. Where are the human passions in this voluntary martyrdom of all the peoples? War by *raison d'état* serves no human passion, it serves a false idea. That is why, when the pacifists have returned from the battle-field—if they do return—we shall need, side by side with the military effort, which is always necessary but insufficient—this war will have proved it to Germany—we shall, I say, need prodigiously their effort and their devotion to peace, if our victory is not to be annulled by the war which will break out again in fifty years."

*November 28*

Alas, I write the same thing to all, and yet I recopy it here with a great effort of patience. By

dint of saying the same thing over and over, I hope one day to find the clear, simple formula—the formula which carries final conviction—which carries conviction for all. . . .

To Aunt Eugénie. "The English army is said to be splendid and, finally, in good shape. It proves it already, but it is a sort of satisfaction which, at bottom, is not unaccompanied by angry protest, by a terrible shrug of the shoulders.

"No, I am not one of those who are cheered by coming offensives. Let us say: 'It is necessary,' and then let us keep silent. There should be no exultation over such victories. Victory? It had to be, that is all. Enough reminiscences and commonplaces: A victory *is not sung*, it is wept."

To Marie G . . . "You speak of Wilson. . . . Oh! it is not in the papers that interpretations should be sought! The fact that the little neutral states of Europe do not respond to his gesture—something which he probably never expected—is nothing beside this fact, that the gesture has been made. One must be utterly ignorant of historic beginnings not to assign their importance to initial fillips. 'Idealism?' But there is not a human enterprise which has not its motive and its point of departure in an idea. The present war is richer in idealism, in mad mysticism, than all the programmes of the pacifists. How ideological this German definition—and not only German—of the State! And how well we recognize the books

and the speeches—how well we recognize the ideas—comparatively recent, moreover—how well we recognize the idealists responsible in the present cataclysm! False economic ideas, false ethnological ideas, absurd hobbies concerning the 'psychology of peoples,' traditional and bookish interpretations of historians, recourse to outworn and, moreover, inoperative means—that is all there is in modern wars.

"There is nothing, not even the general resignation to 'human passions'—that scandalous old story—which is not false, unpardonable prejudice, pretentious ideology of men's brains. A general mobilization is not decreed to satisfy the passions of men torn from their firesides. War, for peoples, for all peoples, *is obedience to the laws.* And to conclude that what is ordered cannot be prevented, that to take measures with a view to its future prevention is 'idealism,' is but an example of the partial imbecility to which prejudice can lead peoples who are, for the rest, normal and intelligent."

## 1917

*March 6, 1917*

To Henry Marx. "I am sure that Magdeleine will say fine things, and that she will know how to avoid shocking honorable and *necessary* sentiments. There is no question of weakening our fighting

spirit. We are all agreed, alas, that the discussion must be carried on to the ground of pity and tears: *The division is not there.*

"But there are not two worlds: 'The intellectual' and the real. 'The intellectual' is only a greater application, a greater attention to the real."

## 1918

*Lorient, May 1918*

To Mme. Duclaux. "For whom is your Victor Hugo? I pity you for being obliged to reread all his claptrap. The great poets themselves are made for great moments only. The continuity, the longevity of lyricism is a reef. The finest poetic heritages are those left by the poets of a few volumes: Shelley, Vigny, Mary Robinson."

To Marie-Aimée. "They carp at Claude, as they used to at Philippe Alquier. People never love superiority in the exact shade desired. At bottom they love only the superiority which they despise.

"Oh! in the matter of criticism, you are perfectly right. A critic has never proved anything but himself. As for sensibility, do not let yourself be overawed by it. The young have admirably avenged me in this regard.

"Believe that, in the matter of sensibility, I also have my exigencies, and the works which satisfy these gentlemen are very far from meeting them."

To M. A. . . . "You write verses. 'That is a consolation,' said Goethe. For my part, I confess that the work of art does not console me more than twenty minutes of Swedish gymnastics. This does me the same kind of good. It keeps you in shape and permits you to dispense with being consoled."

To M. A. . . . "The danger passes, but the grief remains. And to think that other things are published in the reviews, even novels, and that there does not exist a man's or woman's mind which does not place anything whatsoever before the problem of peace. . . ."

Castlereagh refusing to subordinate Europe to an international police in which the Russian army would be the most powerful element. This system would open to Russia the territories of all the confederate states so as to exercise its guarantee at the most distant points of Europe. He responded to the logical deductions which Alexander drew from the Holy Alliance—in the name of the sacred and inviolable Trinity—and from the preceding treaties: "A limited alliance for definite objects is one thing; a universal union to act for a common cause, in circumstances which cannot be foreseen, is quite another. The admittance, into European councils, of a number of little states, would be to open the door to the intrigues and the perils which are reduced to their minimum in a close alliance. The difficulty of exactly distributing the importance of the members constituting such an assembly, has

been demonstrated by the constitution of the Federal Diet, in which the feeble electoral power given to Austria and to Prussia has led to a rivalry to secure supporters." Far from such a line being able to lead to disarmament, the decisive influence would belong to the big battalions. It is to be feared that Emperor Alexander disguised to himself, under the language of an evangelical abnegation, the ambition to usurp, in the new European confederation, the preponderant position which Austria has obtained in the Germanic Confederation.

To M. A. . . . "And then, you know, I shall never be able to arrange marriages. I have a horror of confidences, and I do nothing to attract them. Abnormal, is it not, for a writer? But their rubbish is so commonplace, so imitative, 'in the manner of' . . . I need so little as a writer, and I am so many leagues away from it as a woman.

"As writer, I take from them what they do not know; and, as a woman, I take nothing. I ask conscious confidences of history only."

*August 1*

Alas! yes, a world of heroes. I admire. Above all, I wish to weep and to go mad. It is dangerous to be kept for four years in the presence of an admirable object. Yes, a world of heroes. Will it be easier to love in it after than before? O profound mystery of personality, you who achieve high loves,

who obtain them from those who give them, the exacting, the particular, the implacable, wherein then do you reside?

Personal value, we demand character, whereas you are spirit. It is possible that we demand spirit when you are character?

Conclusion: If I love this hero, and not that, it will be because of some shade in him which was there before heroism, and I am not speaking of blind love, but of love-friendship, love-esteem, love-moral-surrender. O mystery of personality. O Altitudo! . . .